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THE
H O M I C I D E.

A NOVEL.

TAKEN FROM THE
COMEDIE DI GOLDONI,

BY MARY CHARLTON,

AUTHOR OF "THE WIFE AND MISTRESS," &c.

The guilt of conscience take thou for thy labour;

With Cain go wander through the shade of night,
And never Show thy head—

RICHARD II.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE
H O M I C I D E.

CHAP. I.

THE abode to which Rosaura was conducted by Maria, gave her an involuntary shock, from what appeared to her its meanness, and the wretchedness of the situation in which it stood: but she recollected that she had prescribed the limits of the sum to be allowed for the weekly hire of it, and would not utter a syllable that could give Maria or her

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mother reason to suppose that she was dissatisfied with their exertions.

“ Away with the indulgence of absurd vanities !” thought Rosaura, as she gazed round her ; “ henceforth I must dismiss them, and be contented with what the necessities of nature imperiously demand, and what the destitute can obtain.”

“ Ah, Signora !” exclaimed Maria, in a mournful accent, “ you are silent ; but I can guess what you think, and I know as well as you, that this place is not fit for you.—My mother said so directly ; but neither she nor Battista could get a better ; and I am sure Battista, to oblige us, would have run all over Naples !—but just at this time, he said, lodgings were so dear.”

“ I am well satisfied with these,” replied Rosaura ; “ they are adapted to my circumstances, and I am well assured likewise, that your mother would not have spared herself any trouble to serve me. And now, Maria, I wish you to understand

stand that, for the future, I must work for my subsistence: if you still chuse to partake of my fallen fortunes, you must work also; but if you prefer, which would be very natural, to seek a service where you might advance the interests of your family, I may possibly still possess the power of obtaining one for you."

"No, no, I do not desire it," returned Maria in an impatient tone: "I wish only to remain with you—to work for you—to work hard, as I have been brought up to do, that you may not be obliged to work, because you were not born for that. Let me stay with you, dear lady, that when you sigh and grieve, I may pray to Heaven and its Saints, that one so good and so charitable may not suffer affliction; and when you shed tears, I will weep too! I know that it is a comfort, when hardships make us weep, to have others cry with us; for once it was all the comfort that my family had, till you made us smile and rejoice! — Ah, Signora! we

cannot do as much for you ; but we will labour for you—all of us—they told me to tell you so !”

Maria had fallen at her feet, at the conclusion of this sentence, and was embracing her knees with humble affection, when Rosaura desired her to rise.

“ Oh nature !” exclaimed she, “ in thy uncultivated children will I henceforth look for the noblest virtues.—What my refined associates refused me, the hearts of this family are emulous to offer—this family once almost famishing within the walls of Naples *the noble*.”

“ And can we ever forget that you almost saved us from famishing, Signora Illustrissima?—No, no, we are not statues without souls ! Tell me then, what I shall do myself, and let me set the rest of us to work for you !”

“ My good Maria,” said her Lady, “ to-night we must arrange our little affairs, and then we will retire to rest—to-morrow

to-morrow I will communicate my plan to you."

In the effervescence of her zeal, Maria would fain have begun her own particular portion of toil immediately ; but Rosaura gently restrained the precipitate eagerness of her impatience : and on the following day, when she had not only instructed Maria, but assisted her likewise in rendering her humble abode as neat and as convenient as possible, she imparted to her the project she had formed of making flowers, straw toys, and different kinds of embroidered ornaments, such as she had assisted the Nuns of the convent in which she had been brought up, to make for sale during the latter part of the time she had resided with them.

"When a sufficient number of these are completed," said Rosaura, "I must then employ your brother Antonino, in carrying them about the principal streets and places, to sell them to advantage ;

and probably your father, Maria, would instruct him where he might find the best market for his commodities?"

"That he would with his whole heart," replied she earnestly; "and I, Signora, what can I do?"

"I will teach you to assist me," said Rosaura: "but first, my good girl, you must procure me the materials I will mention on this paper; and at the same time, go to your father, and beg him to enquire amongst his comrades, should he not know it himself, for the residence of the Dottore Buonatesta: when I can learn this, I will send a billet to this Procuratore by you."

Maria received her instructions with the most eager alacrity; and hastily attiring herself for her walk, desired the woman of the house to attend to the convenience of her dear Lady, in her absence: she then went forth upon her double commission, much elated with the happiness of finding herself of real service to Rosaura.

In

In the absence of her faithful attendant, Rosaura found her fortitude subdued for a few moments by the reflections that uninterruptedly assailed her; and the cruel conduct of her uncle again wrung the unwilling tears from her eyes.

In the height of her meditation, the necessity occurred to her of imparting her present residence to Signora Beatrice, without which, neither letters nor any other communication could attain her from Ruvello; and most reluctantly she resolved to send Maria to their former hostess, with a billet containing her address, and an urgent request to preserve it a secret from any one not immediately commissioned by her husband to seek her, except indeed, any part of his family who might perchance have the unexpected humanity to enquire for her.

She would likewise have indicated her humble residence to an ancient servant of Signor Anselmo, who had expressed much

regret and inquietude at her quitting the house of his master ; but that she feared it would not only appear an indirect application to the bounty of the good old merchant, but be the means of giving Count Orvino a clue to her abode, when he returned to Naples ; and perhaps, by the effect of his generous concern for her, occasion a renewal of those slanderous reports, which mortified and shocked her more than any other distressing event attending the ruin of Ruvello.

In less than two hours, Maria returned with her brother Antonino, who equally with herself, was laden with the articles she had been commissioned to purchase. She brought Rosaura the address of the Procuratore likewise, which he happened to know ; and introducing Antonino to her, she commended his industry and dexterity, and promised in his name, that he should exert them both with equal zeal in the service of Signora Ruvello, who was so much revered by them all.

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To this, Antonino himself, an intelligent looking boy of about fourteen, very readily assented; and Rosaura instantly conceived the project of sending him with the intended billet to Signora Beatrice, which would prevent those interrogations from the domestics, Maria would find it difficult to refuse replying to;—she detained him therefore, whilst she wrote it, and having charged him to insist upon delivering the paper only to Signora Beatrice herself, and not to inform any other person of the household from whom he received it, away flew Antonino.

In the evening, Maria was entrusted with a letter to the Procuratore, entreating him to call at the house it accurately described, upon business of the utmost importance to Signor Ruvello and his wife: and these cares past, Rosaura began to use the materials which had been procured her, with a dexterity and effect that surprised and delighted Maria, who offered a prayer to her namesake, the Virgin, that

B 5

she

she would instantly endow her with the same talent ; but as her petition was not complied with, her Lady was compelled to work with an assiduity equal to her taste : and in two days Antonino was supplied with a small open basket of wares, which his father desired him to expose to the view of the ladies at the entrance of the Corso, and other places of public resort.

This plan succeeded ; for the things were extravagantly commended, and the whole stock exchanged for money, in three or four hours.

In the interim, the Dottore Buonatesta deigned not to notice the letter Rosaura had dispatched to him ; and she now wrote a second, which Antonino delivered to the Procuratore himself, who condescendingly replied that he would attend the lady the next morning : but the next morning and the whole of the following day passed by, without witnessing the performance of this promise, and Rosaura supposed that she must apply to some other

other less dignified and more assiduous gentleman of the law. She congratulated herself, however, that she could assure herself a maintenance, poor though it were, whilst she awaited the motions of these Procuratori; and having worked with indefatigable zeal to replenish a third time, the basket of her young agent, she had almost succeeded, when she discovered that she wanted some materials to finish a few of the articles, and was taking out her purse to give Maria the purchase-money, when the Dottore Buonatesta was announced.

Rosaura experienced some confusion on beholding almost every chair and table her little apartment contained, occupied with the effects of her industry; and whilst Maria and herself were hastily gathering them up, Antonino introduced the Procuratore, who entered with a very lofty air: and having gazed round the room and its furniture, with some few symptoms of contempt, he desired to

receive the commands of the Signora Ruvello.

Rosaura endeavouring to regain some presence of mind, motioned to him to take a seat, and intimated to Maria, who was still very busy, that she might withdraw: -but the girl, not liking the countenance nor the manner of the Dottore Buonatesta, and having, likewise, heard that all lawyers were thieves and cheats, would not take the hint her Lady gave her, but resolved to remain in the room, to guard the purse Rosaura had unconsciously laid upon a table near her.

This purse, Maria well knew, contained the whole fortune of her beloved mistress; and whilst Rosaura began a detail of the business in which she was desirous of engaging the legal talents of the Dottore, Maria stationed herself behind her, and very quietly continued the scrutiny she had begun, fixing her sparkling black eyes alternately on those of the Procuratore, and upon the purse, towards which
he

he certainly cast, from time to time, a most suspicious leer, apparently enamoured of the bright *scudi* that shone through the net-work.

Rosaura turned at length to her attendant, and looked expressively towards the door; but Maria would not understand the glance.

“ You may pass to the other room,” said her Lady.

“ Yes, Signora Illustrissima,” replied the girl, in a submissive accent; but at the same time she remained immovable.

“ From all that I have heard of this affair,” said the Procuratore, from respectable authority, as well as common report, and from your present statement, I am convinced that no favour or lenity will be extended to Signor Ruvello: the Venari family are so numerous, so powerful, and their influence so extensive, that any decree obtained by them, will neither
be

be revoked nor revised: but you may petition for a pension for yourself individually, and I will take care that every essential form, both in the drawing up, and in the presentation of it to the necessary Ministers, shall be attended to. There must likewise be several attested copies, to distribute to those whom you imagine likely to forward it.—You are descended, I think you said, Signora Illustrissima, from the Viralva family:—that is indeed a great name, though the house is at present rather—rather decayed! But to our business—there are several men in official situations, who are not very delicate or very scrupulous—in fact I must be clearly understood——”

The Procuratore hesitated; and having regarded Maria with an air not to be misunderstood, Rosaura commanded her to retire in terms so explicit, that she dared not disobey: but making a grimace of anger and suspicion at the Dottore,

as

as she passed him, with a lingering pace she reached the door, and closed it after her.

The hesitation of the Procuratore now ceased ; and he informed Rosaura without further circumlocution, that she must see several of the satellites of Administration.

“ I fear then,” said Rosaura, “ I must give up every hope of success, since I have not the power of doing this. Signor Dottore, I must of necessity, explain to you my situation, which is indeed far from authorising me to call upon you for the exertion of your professional skill in my behalf, but that I have a hope either Signor Ruvello or myself, may be enabled to remunerate you at a future period.— I am reduced to extreme poverty, and the family of my husband have abandoned me : the sale of these trifles, and others of the same kind, is at present, and must continue to be, my only means of existence.—Decayed indeed is the unhappy house
of

of Viralva !” added she, unable to restrain a tear, as the sentence escaped her.

“Where is now the Marquis di Viralva?” demanded the Procuratore : — “surely he might assist you.”

“My unfortunate cousin,” returned Rosaura, “is, I fear, almost as destitute as myself. In his early years he was presented to the Prince di Piombino, as an orphan of noble descent, without a ducat to sustain his helpless and unprotected childhood ; and this Prince, compassionating his situation, received him into his own service as one of his pages : but in consequence of some accidental circumstance, aided perhaps by the incautious follies of youth, he lost the favour of the Prince shortly after he had passed from the antichamber to the military service ; when, finding every hope of speedy promotion crushed, about three years since he entered the Venetian service, in the expectation of being able to distinguish himself, and obtaining a post suited to his
5 rank

rank in life. But the Republic has almost from that time been at peace with its neighbours; and my cousin being again disappointed in his views, Signor Ruvello, not much more than a month since, invited him to Naples, to essay his fortune in our army."

"Hum! unfortunate, very unfortunate!—But now to business, Signora Ruvello.—You say that you are reduced to extreme poverty, and cannot therefore obtain the necessary influence of certain men, who, in short, always sell their favour: but you probably misconceive the extent of the sum *immediately* requisite: as for the future, why we must manage as we can—but let us put the affair in a train at least, let us not sink into supineness without an effort!—I will consider—five, and five to the secretary, and then five or six more to—hum! and three or four—upon my word, about twenty crowns would do!—they would

would actually do, could you but raise them."

"Twenty crowns I can command," said Rosaura, half terrified at the prospect of stripping herself of a resource so hardly gained, yet delighted that she could meet the proposals of her adviser: "these I can command," added she, taking them from her purse;—"but, Signor Dottore, they are all I possess in the world.—Yet no matter—apply them, however, I conjure you with cautious judgment;—pardon me, my anxiety renders me impertinent; but you can excuse me, no doubt?"

"Oh yes! yes, most assuredly—it is natural you should feel reluctant to part with a sum that may appear in your eyes considerable," replied the Procuratore, throwing the twenty crowns into his pocket: "but the end to be obtained, being you know, very important, you are right not to hesitate. I will now relieve you from the inconvenience my
presence

presence here may occasion. — Signora Illustrissima, you shall hear from me very shortly ;—preserve your courage and your hopes.—Adieu !”

“ Why does my soul misgive me thus ?” exclaimed Rosaura, after his departure. “ I cannot become very destitute whilst I exert my industry in the little devices I am fortunate enough to have been fond of observing and imitating from my childhood. It is true, I regarded that sum as a resource—and it has been a resource, a most happy one—without it, I must have declined the proposition of this Procuratore, or have revealed to Ruvello that I had thrown away, as Countess Almerini terms it, that portion of my jewels he imagines I still possess. Yet however ill requited I have been, I will not repent that my heart obeyed the call of compassion or of duty, because the heart of another is insensible to it, or that my nature is not sufficiently perverted to inflict upon a friend, or even an associate
the

the pangs which neglect and unkindness occasion, because those who called themselves my friends have inflicted those pangs upon me !”

Maria, who had stolen into the room during this reverie, walked eagerly to the table, where the purse still lay ; and perceiving that its contents were diminished almost to the last crown, she half shrieked at this accomplishment of her secret prediction.

“ Oh the villain ! the good for nothing villain !” exclaimed she : “ he has robbed you—I see he has—and yet, Signora Padrona, you would make me leave the room ! Oh the black-hearted thief ! to rob such a good and sweet lady of her all !”

“ Hush ! hush !” interrupted Rosaura, “ you misapprehend the circumstance : I gave him the money for a very important purpose. Be pacified, Maria ; all will go well ;—those twenty scudi will, I hope, procure me many, many more !”

“ Ah,

“Ah, Signora, I cannot help crying!—a mouse in the trap, you may give your cat; but a mouse in a hole you must catch first! so Battista says, and it’s true enough!—The ugly wretch! I saw him looking at the money all the while I was here, and then I thought how it would be!”

It was not without difficulty, and some exertion of authority, that Rosaura composed the exasperated mind of Maria: but at length, not to vex her beloved Lady, she dried her eyes, and called Antonino to take his basket of merchandize, which Rosaura thought proper to make up without waiting for the completion of the unfinished articles; so much, though silently and secretly, was she disquieted by the present slender state of her finances.

Again however, in the course of the morning, the boy exchanged the contents of his basket, for rather more than Rosaura had computed them to be worth;
and

and the spirits of Maria, as well as those of her Lady, were elevated by the established success of this happy expedient.

With renewed alacrity, Rosaura then exerted herself to pursue the plan to a yet greater extent; and Maria, who was naturally quick and ingenious, began to be of some assistance to her. She would not however, suffer her attention to be exclusively occupied by this employment, important though it were to her existence; but finding that the Dottore Buonatesta was rather dilatory in drawing up the petition, as at the end of five days, she found that it was not yet accomplished, she pursued him with letters, as well as personal argument, so assiduously, that at length he thought proper to finish it, and it was presented to the Ministry.

Upon this occasion, Rosaura prevailed upon herself to seek the Countess Almerini, to entreat her influence in behalf of her plea; and attended by Maria, she wrapped herself in a veil, and as early as
she

she could hope for admittance, presented herself at her gate: but the servant who opened it, replied to her enquiry, that the Countess was indisposed, and could not be seen.

“Take my name to her,” said Rosaura: “your Lady will not, I think, refuse me a few moments of conversation—at all events, take in my name?”

The man complied with evident reluctance, and in five minutes returned with a report from the principal female attendant of the Countess, that his Lady was very much displeased to have been disturbed so early, and desired that the Signora Ruvello would send her word where she now lived, and she would call at her lodgings.

“Tell Countess Almerini,” replied Rosaura, endeavouring to overcome her indignation, “that she would have known where I reside before this, had she deigned to have applied to the sister of Signor Anselmo at the habitation I lately quitted:

quitted: there she may still learn my present abode."

She then turned from the door, to conceal the emotion she could no longer restrain, and walked towards her humble home, her good-hearted companion partaking her evident distress, and more than sharing the resentment Rosaura experienced.

CHAP. II.

AT her return, she learned from the mistress of the house who opened the door to her, that the Procuratore had called in her absence, and would repeat his visit the next day.

“ Surely he cannot yet have to announce to me the success of his effort,” thought she, “ yet it may be so; and assuredly I will then rejoin my unfortunate husband, and think myself happy to share his banishment from this ungrateful spot, where mortifications and miseries only appear to await me.”

The idea that the petition might have already been granted, was soon however dissipated by reflections that pointed out the impossibility that it should even yet have been read or distinguished, unsupported as it was, from amidst the many that were daily presented.

“ Who is there now in Naples,” thought she, “ that would exert themselves to advance the interest, or urge the suit of the ruined Ruvello or his wife—no one! His companions, his associates, his *friends*, for thus he called them, and thus they thought proper to distinguish themselves, shrink from our poverty, invent the calumny which others believe, and readily accredit the calumny which others invent!—this is the friendship of the dissipated and the selfish—of those beings with whom it would have been most probably my destiny to have passed my days, but for the event that has actually happened, or what was equally likely to come to pass, ruin by
the

the gaming-table ! Can I then think the annihilation of our fortune an evil ?—no, it would be a blessing could Ruvello learn to be contented with the competence he may obtain ; and could he alas ! obliterate from his recollection that he has shed the blood of a fellow-creature, he would merely have exchanged a life of listless insipidity, for the laudable exertion that renders subsequent ease and relaxation a blessing, and by giving energy to the mind, raises it to a faculty of enjoyment which idle affluence may seek in vain. What else could influence me to regret the retreat which my late associates would have called gloomy, but where gaiety and vivacity illumined every hour of my existence !

Oh my cruel uncle ! your compulsive arguments, your angry representations impelled me to the fate of which you aggravate the bitterness—and how can I now expel from my mind the horrible suspicion that you are actuated merely

by worldly policy, in thus shunning the wretch you have made! Harsh and repulsive though you were, your roof afforded me happiness; but you drove me from it, and bound my destiny to one with whom my mind will not assimilate—let me repel such an idea!—yet it will not be repelled—and still further to embitter my lot, another will intrude, to mock me with a reflected picture of happiness, such as the fond expectation of my early youth once sketched. Oh image too seductive, too well according with the visions which romantic fancy once created, let me not cherish thee, or thou wilt destroy me! Give me, oh virtue! to curb my wandering thoughts with thy sternest principles, and recall my straying heart, lest thy unerring voice should reach it but in whispers, and be lost amidst the delusive pleas which inclination would incessantly urge!”

“Eccellentissima!” said Maria, entering hastily.

“Give

“ Give me no longer a title which my present fortune renders ridiculous,” interrupted Rosaura : “ what would you ? ”

“ The Marquis D’Asavoli,” resumed the attendant, casting a glance of distress round the apartment : “ shall I tell him you are not within, Signora Padrona ? ”

The eye of Rosaura intuitively repeated the glance, and she hesitated.

“ Where could he learn my place of refuge ? ” exclaimed she in an accent of regret : “ the Procuratore must have informed him of it, no doubt—why did I not recollect to caution him ?—I will see the Marquis,” resumed she, after a silent pause ; “ admit him ! ”

Maria, who had awaited the result of the momentary debate in evident anxiety, first arranged the furniture to the best advantage, and then obeyed this command.

“ Why should I be shocked at the natural consequence of that poverty which every one must imagine,” argued

Rosaura : “ this man is supposed by Ruvello to be his friend, and circumstanced as I now find myself, I must not refuse to see him, unless he should give me unquestionable reason wholly to exclude him from any place that may shelter me.”

Asavoli started at his entrance with an ostentatious air of concern, which had he really felt, he would have suppressed every indication of : it was meant to paint to the feelings of Rosaura, that he had beheld her under a gilded roof, and compassionated her hard fate that she had been compelled to exchange it for the habitation of penury : unknown to herself, she assumed a mien more elevated, and received the salutation of the Marquis with the same dignity she might have displayed in the superb mansion where he had first beheld her. Whilst Asavoli, who was prepared to mortify her with condolences, and excite her acknowledgments by pompous tenders of service
and

and protection, felt that awkward abashment which presumption depressed generally betrays, and almost spite of himself, evidenced a respect and consideration the more marked, as it arose from the constraint of a sudden impression, acting upon preconcerted insolence.

“ Signor Marchese,” said Rosaura, after Maria, by her direction, had placed seats, “ that you thus seek out the wife of your banished friend, indicates that attachment to Ruvello which he ever piqued himself upon possessing, and will no doubt console him in a great degree for the neglect of others, upon whose boasted attachment he equally relied.”

“ Is it possible,” returned Asavoli, “ that any one could be so inimical to their own happiness, as to neglect any opportunity of beholding and conversing with Signora Ruvello? I am not that senseless being, because I experience——

“ Have you,” interrupted Rosaura, “ yet received any intelligence of my

exiled husband? I am anxious for his welfare, for his health, and the situation of his mind."

"Has he not written—has he not sent you any intelligence of himself?" demanded Asavoli in a marked accent: "and is it possible that he should not have required repeated intelligence of you! What strange indifference to the fate his imprudence has drawn upon a being——"

"His silence proceeds from inability, not from want of inclination to break it," said Rosaura hastily: "this is the only apprehension I can have, and you who are the friend of Ruvello, cannot allow yourself to suggest any other motive for that want of information which so much disturbs me. You have not then learned any thing concerning him?"

"He was perfectly in health," returned Asavoli, "when his official attendants quitted him on the confines of Naples; and I understood from the Lieutenant who

who commanded the escort, that he had recovered his spirits, and sought amusement when they halted, in cards with him and his brother officers."

"I am pleased to learn this," said Rossaura, suppressing the vexation this insidious intelligence was calculated to excite: "yet I still fear that in traversing the unwholesome campagna of Rome in weather so sultry, his health may have subsequently suffered—of this however you say you have not any information; and I must endure my anxiety with as much patience as possible. Meantime, to the friend of my unfortunate husband I may, without being importunate I hope, relate what I am doing for his benefit, equally with my own. As I was informed that to plead against the interest of the family Ruvello has so unhappily incensed, would be useless, especially as I know that his own family abandon me, I have acceded to the advice of the Procuratore Bonatesta, and presented a petition

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which

which perhaps the Marquis D'Asavoli will condescend to support with his interest.

“ Can Signora Ruvello doubt this?” exclaimed he: “ what exertion is there which I would not use to obtain her good opinion—her preferable regard?”

“ Your language is ambiguous,” said Rosaura gravely; “ I may perhaps injure your integrity by misinterpreting that sentence—explain it to your own honour and my satisfaction, and I will sincerely thank you: I should find it difficult at this moment, to endure insult, abject as perhaps you think the inhabitant of this place should be—and even the mere suspicion that an insult is intended me, I find very painful!”

“ This place is ennobled by its inhabitant,” returned Asavoli, whose insolence was again curbed as much by the remonstrance itself, as by the mien with which it was made: “ can you think *me* so abject as intentionally to wound your
too

too sensitive soul?—No, Signora Ruvello, as I am anxious to obtain your good opinion, this cannot be—on the contrary, I would fain heal every wound which an adverse destiny may inflict—a destiny so little agreeing with the merit it outrages.”

“It is difficult and irksome to reply either to panegyric or professions,” said Rosaura with increasing solemnity: “no other reply is indeed expected but that of thankful acknowledgment—yet I should first wish to know if the panegyric of which I am the subject, be merited, lest I should offer gratitude where it would be ill bestowed. My opinions offend you, Signor Marchese—excuse the uncourtly rusticity of my character, and if you would truly possess yourself of my esteem, forget not that your absent friend is sufficiently unfortunate in exile and in poverty, and add not to the evils that overwhelm him, by withdrawing the attachment you professed, when his friend-

ship accredited you in the public eye. Will you now allow me to intimate to you that I have avocations, important indeed to me, which require a considerable portion of my attention: yet I must ever receive with equal satisfaction and acknowledgment, the notice of those who entitle themselves to the gratitude of Ruvello."

"Suffer me then to entitle myself to his gratitude," returned the Marquis, "by removing you from this place so unworthy of you!"

"I should be unworthy of obtaining even the shelter of such a roof as this," said Rosaura warmly, "could I not contract my habits to the standard of my fortune, rather than cast myself upon the compassion of any one! — A Viralva, Signor Marchese, will not submit to receive any succour which the world could suspect to be tendered from any sinister motive—I can bend to poverty—fortune has well tried my hapless race in that school

of endurance; but a Viralva will not live under the slightest shadow of dishonour! This sentiment is my sole inheritance, and never will I consent to disgrace it, or give mankind a just occasion to sully with suspicion my conduct or my character!"

"Why am I thus misinterpreted?" exclaimed the Marquis: "surely my ideas and my intentions can be but ill expressed."

"I will give them that sense only which you would wish them to bear," returned Rosaura.

"Forgive me, Signora Ruvello," resumed the Marquis, "if my zeal for your welfare have hurried me beyond the strict limits your apprehensive delicacy may have raised; and believe that on every occasion you will find me devoted to your service. The petition you have condescended to recommend to me, it shall be my first care to forward to the utmost of my power: and you will allow me

me the honour of reporting to you the progress I hope to make towards its success."

With secret unwillingness, Rosaura complied with this request; yet on reflecting upon the preceding conversation, she could not for a moment suppose that the Marquis had really the remotest intention of granting any aid towards a project, which would place her beyond the reach of his insidious services: but she feared to reject them with the disdain she was too well ascertained they merited, lest Ruvello disappointed in every expectation, should conceive that she had fastidiously repulsed those offered aids which would have obtained the accomplishment of his wishes.

Nor was this the only immediate cause for anxiety that harassed her; for the Countess Almerini, far from making the visit she had deigned to promise through the mouth of her servant, appeared to have forgotten that such a being as Signora Ruvello

Ruvello existed; and at the same time Rosaura had the mortification of perceiving that Antonino, her young agent, could not dispose of the contents of his basket with the facility he had at first experienced. Vainly did she redouble her assiduity, and vary her works with the most fanciful ingenuity; still Antonino was far from being as successful as he wished, though he tormented the Cavaliers, as well as the ladies by incessant applications, and ran by the side of their carriages with the most indefatigable exertions.

In the interim, Rosaura sent her faithful Maria repeatedly to receive of Signora Beatrice, the intelligence or the letter she hourly and with increased uneasiness expected from her husband: but neither the one nor the other had arrived at the house of the good old Anselmo, and he was still absent from Naples.

During one of these fruitless excursions of Maria, the formidable Procuratore
called

called upon her Lady; and after a pompous renumeration of his efforts in her favour, in which the illustrious Marchese had zealously joined, he said, he informed her that though he would willingly await her convenience for the payment of his own professional services, yet there were still fees and bribes, as he had already informed her, which must be advanced whenever they were requisite.

The heart of Rosaura sunk at this inauspicious intelligence, which was the more cruel, as she had been given to understand that the demand upon her exhausted purse would not soon be repeated; and the pang she endured was sharpened, when she learned that the sum immediately wanted, exceeded all the money she possessed by several crowns.

In a faint accent she communicated to the Procuratore her inability to comply with his request; a circumstance he listened to without any symptom of surprise or compassion: and having con-
descendingly

descendingly assured her that he would for the present supply the deficiency, he relentlessly tore from her the little sum she produced.

The Dottore Buonatesta then made his parting bow, and vanished.

When Rosaura found herself alone, she clasped her hands with a sudden and energetic motion, and turning her swimming eyes upwards to demand that succour which appeared not to await her upon earth, she found relief to her labouring bosom in a violent burst of tears: but on hearing the step of Maria approaching the apartment, she hastily dried them, and catching up a little silk pocket-book which she was embroidering, pretended to be earnestly employed upon it.

“There is no letter yet, Signora,” said Maria in a melancholy accent; “and that cross old Beatrice insists that I do not call there any more, because she says, like a good-for-nothing old witch as she is, that
it

it is only a pretence to know when the good Signor Anselmo comes back again : and then she made me go away whilst she stood at the door, because I asked to see old Annibal, who is sick a-bed they tell me—and that is the reason I have never met with him yet I suppose. Signora Beatrice, promised me however, to send a letter or any thing else when it comes—and now, Signora Padrona, I will go to market.”

Rosaura silently produced her purse, and Maria observing that it contained only a few Carlins, turned pale, and clapping her hands together—“ By the holy cross,” exclaimed she, “ that devilish Procuratore has been here again ! When I see him next, I will tear his eyes out !—Oh my beloved lady ! why will you let him strip you thus of what you worked so hard for ?—the rogue, the hard-hearted thief !—Forgive me, Signora Illustrissima, forgive your poor Maria—but I am sure he will do you no good—for whoever did
good

good with such a face as God has given him!—Oh my dear lady, do not weep thus!” added Maria, the tears gushing from her own eyes; “it’s over and cannot be helped—Antonino will be lucky to-day, I am sure he will; and I will work night and day to make up for the loss.”

Rosaura extended her hand to her, but could not speak; and for a few moments they wept together, in a silence neither Maria nor her Lady could break: nor would either have thought further of the marketing, had not the sight of the almost empty purse reminded Rosaura of the necessity of it.

Her faithful attendant without any instruction on the subject, adapted her purchases to the slender ability of the buyer; and Rosaura unable to eat herself, was much hurt to remark that Maria checked her own inclination to diminish the little repast she had produced.

The poor girl’s comforting prediction of the good fortune of Antonino, proved in
the

the evening to be entirely fallacious ; for never yet had the boy so much failed in procuring the money, now become so instantly necessary to Rosaura ; who passed a miserable and sleepless night, which did not by any means increase her inclination to receive the Marquis D'Asavoli, who thought proper to repeat his visit the next morning.

“ I bring you intelligence of Ruvello,” said he ; “ and thus I proclaim my title to the smile which will reward my assiduity ! —But you are ill !—you are——”

“ I have been rather indisposed,” interrupted Rosaura : “ it is passed I hope—have you any letter from my husband ?”

“ I have neither letter nor remembrance of any kind,” replied the Marquis : “ I obtained the information I speak of, from Count D'Astia, who writes that he saw Signor Ruvello at Florence in high health and spirits.”

“ At

“ At Florence !” repeated Rosaura ; “ I fear then—how long is it since Count D’Astia wrote this ?”

“ He wrote it only a few days back : but it is a fortnight, or rather more, since he first encountered Ruvello, who meant to pursue his route to Modena in ten days ; so that he is now there.”

“ Count Orvino will then miss him !” exclaimed she in a tone of regret : “ did you hear—do you know, Signor Marchese,” she added after a momentary pause, “ why he so soon quitted Rome ?”

“ He travelled from thence to Florence with a party of Cavaliers and ladies,” returned Asavoli : “ here is the letter—yet do not read it ! I will relate its contents to you : Ruvello intends to remain only a short time at Modena, and from thence he proceeds with his associates to Venice.”

“ Who are these associates ?” demanded Rosaura, unconsciously regarding the letter with a wistful eye. “ Count D’Astia
is

is a man Ruvello has spoken of in terms of high commendation, which I must believe to be just, since the testimony of others concurs with it. If the letter should not contain any circumstances of private moment between the Count and yourself, you will allow me perhaps—or you will have the indulgence to read to me those sentences in which my husband is mentioned?”

“That cannot be!” exclaimed Asavoli: “no, too charming Signora Ruvello, I would not impart to your gentle heart the pain—but what am I saying!”

“Enough to convince me,” said Rosaura indignantly, “that your pretended reluctance is rather an eager wish to infuse into my mind suspicions, which I reject with that contempt the man who would inspire them should partake of.”

“Nay then, Signora Illustrissima, since my delicacy is thus misconstrued, I must justify myself in your eyes, whatever be the consequence—the

the route Ruvello has taken is well known, and his conduct—— Count D'Astia writes to me as his friend, in the hope——”

“In the hope,” interrupted Rosaura, “that your conduct would have been that of a friend, whose efforts should be exerted to veil an error from the world, if error there be; and whose influence should be equally exerted to remove that error by representation and remonstrance. I wish not to see this letter, if it be not meant for the eye of a wife—I know the duty of one, Signor Marchese, which in this instance is likewise the duty of every individual of society the one towards the other—not to credit a disadvantageous report until conviction give you full assurance of its truth: and when it be established, pity for that deviation from rectitude, to which we are all liable, should at least be as strong as our censure, and qualify our disapprobation. Pardon me that, interested as I found myself upon
this

this subject, I have so long deferred offering you the thanks which I find are due to you from me, for your exertions to procure the pension I have been advised to solicit."

At this moment Maria entered with precipitation, to announce the Countess Almerini, who followed her very closely with an air of inquisitorial curiosity, uttering an exclamation of disgust and horror at the shocking dungeon into which she was led.

"It must indeed appear a gloomy place in the eyes of the gay and the affluent," replied Rosaura mildly; "and that Countess Almerini condescends to enter it, is a proof of kindness and remembrance that cheers and revives my sinking spirits."

"I perceive," returned the Countess, in a careless accent, "that you receive likewise proofs of recollection from the Marquis Asavoli!—but why, of all the terrible and disgusting holes in Naples, should

should you precisely fix upon this one, which assuredly must be the very worst, for your abode?—This, I presume is great-souled philosophy—an emanation of genius! Count Orvino would be in raptures with such sublimity!—Marchese, were you—can I venture to seat myself!—were you at the conversazione of the Princess di Parmeno last night?—I hear there is a little fracas in that quarter;—but we will talk of this another time. Signora Ruvello, I am sorry to inform you that my cousin Alviano has obtained the domains of Alfonso di Ruvello; and now she has taken her simple daughter from her convent, and produces her to the world as an heiress, whilst Virginia herself affects to regret her late seclusion, and to sigh to return to it, when every one knows her sighs and her regrets are wafted after Orvino.”

“Amiable Virginia!” exclaimed Rosaura: “may she find in the world to which she is thus introduced, a man who in
VOL. II. D selecting

selecting her for a wife, will think her guileless heart a treasure far more valuable than the portion she will bring him!"

"Oh certainly!" said the Countess with a sneer, "Count Orvino for example!"

"Count Orvino you know," returned Asavoli, "would not offer his vows to this fair saint: but as the shrine is now enriched, he may perhaps be induced to kneel at it."

Countess Almerini did not appear pleased with the possibility of such an event, and turning abruptly to Rosaura, she enquired if Ruvello had written to her.

"I have heard it rumoured," added she, "that he is running about, from state to state, with a set of gambling adventurers: so I conclude that they will complete the ruin he so well planned here. But however that may be, I really do not see any occasion you have to shut yourself up in so filthy a recess as this; nor is it the most politic thing you can do, whilst you

are soliciting this pension: for if it appears that you can so well accommodate yourself to the costume of poverty—and I must confess you have fitted it upon you with all that grace, as Count Orvino would say, which characterizes your actions—who would take the trouble to draw you from the situation in which you may charm all hearts with so fine a display of Christian philosophy!”

“How would you have acted in my situation?” asked Rosaura. “You are not ignorant surely, that I was hurried from the house of Signor Anselmo by the petulance of his sister, whom the Duke di Brandosi further irritated against me by the insults he chose to offer her, in endeavouring to gain admittance to my apartment in my absence.”

“How would I have acted!” repeated the Countess: “why, poor ordinary mortals, of which I acknowledge myself to be one, would have stunned the world with despairing clamours, and have compelled

D 2

people

people by a dexterous importunity, subjoining a vulgar representation of the hardships of such a reverse, to alleviate the bitterness of their fate. But Signora Ruvello distinguishes herself from the herd in every situation!"

"It is fortunate," observed Rosaura, whose patience was now exhausted, "that Countess Almerini can be amused by the brilliancy of her own wit and imagination, in a dreary hovel where indigence seeks a refuge; for those who think not of relieving it, could not always have so readily discovered a remedy for the lassitude of such a visit."

"I am fitly repaid for the misplaced compassion that brought me here!" exclaimed the Countess, starting from her seat: "sarcasms from you, Signora Ruvello, in the present instance are very ill-timed, and possibly you may find them so. I beg your protection, Marquis," she added, presenting her hand which Asavoli did not refuse, "to conduct me through the
dark

dark and complicated turnings I encountered at my entrance here; for really they have an appearance so suspicious, that I almost feared a stiletto at every nook I passed. Adieu, Signora Illustrissima!—when this scene is represented to Count Orvino, who will soon return to Naples I imagine, I entreat that you will be merciful.”

“ Still and ever recurring to Count Orvino,” exclaimed Rosaura, when her visitors had quitted her apartment: “ poor Countess Almerini! to your wandering fancy, strayed alas, beyond your power of controul, discretion presents not limits but chains! Let me profit by the error which I may not correct, and recall my own imagination, my own heart from the same devious path, ere they draw me to the confines of guilt, or plunge me into misery. It was perhaps necessary that I should thus struggle in the crushing toils of poverty—that I should each passing day have the care of providing by industry

for the sustenance my nature craves to obtain, that my soul which was attaching itself where fate denies me the licence of loving, should be withdrawn kindly, though roughly, from the smooth and gentle ruin !”

CHAP. III.

ON the following morning as Rosaura and her attendant sat at work, Maria was called to the door by the voice of Antonino.

“ Good fortune, Signora Padrona !” exclaimed she ; “ he is returned already.”

And away flew Maria to ascertain the truth of her prediction.

“ Here

“Here is a Cavalier,” said the boy, “who would come with me, whether I would or no, to see if our Signora Ruvello is a lady he knows: I would not tell her name, but he followed me from place to place, and said I should not sell anything in my basket, if I did not shew him where she lived—so I have brought him to you.”

A stranger now impatiently advancing from the entrance, enquired if Maria were the person who made up the toys.

“What do you want to say to me?” returned Maria.

“I am mistaken,” said the intruder: “I thought I had well known the person who made those pretty trifles;—if you are the composer of them, I have erred.”

“No, Signor Cavalier, it is not her,” said the woman of the house, who at that moment entered it; “her mistress makes them all:—a baggage! she can’t do such tasty things—it’s her mistress, who is as industrious as she is handsome!”

“It must be so!” said the stranger: “take this paper to your Lady, I conjure you, and tell her the Cavalier waits with extreme impatience to behold her. If she recognises that name, she will not conceal herself from me.”

Rosaura who had listened to what passed, when she found that Maria returned not, received the paper in silence; and starting at the name it contained—“Can it be!” she exclaimed, hastily advancing—“Julio? Is it indeed you who thus seek your hapless Rosaura!”

The Cavalier rushed forward with a countenance of mingled pleasure and sorrow, and taking her extended hand, led her back to her apartment, where Rosaura wept for some moments in his arms; and Maria who shut the door they had forgotten to close, beheld his eyes fill with tears as he gazed in silence upon her Lady.

“So, so!” exclaimed the mistress of the house, who awaited poor Maria at her return: “well, to be sure, who would have

have thought this!—but perhaps he is her husband.”

Maria who was herself surprised and rather staggered at the scene she had witnessed, made no reply.

“What a foolish suppose of mine!” resumed the woman: “her husband can’t come back to Naples—but who is he then?—I thought your Lady was not of the sort to encourage gallants—I thought she was too quiet and modest, and all that.”

“And so she is,” retorted Maria, taking fire at the insinuation: “there is not a more virtuous or modester lady in all Naples, or the whole world!”

“Well but, child, who is this gay young Cavalier—is he her brother then?”

“I don’t know,” returned Maria, in a pettish accent: “what a fuss is here! Can’t my Lady have a Cavalier just to come to see her, without all this asking about him?”

“Aye, aye,” said the woman, “but here

is crying and embracing, and what not. This is no common visitor just come to say how do you do !”

“ What is that to you !” exclaimed Maria in a passion.

“ No great matters to be sure !” returned the other : “ only that if it is as I think, she will not long stay here ; but I shall be certain of my money when it is due.”

Saying this, the woman opened the door of her own apartment, and disappeared.

“ I cannot think who he can be !” exclaimed Maria, after having angrily apostrophised the impertinence of their hostess : “ I am certain however, my Lady is as good as she seems to be, so there is no harm in it : but I wish I knew who he was, that I might stop her tongue !”

Rosaura meantime, having recovered from the involuntary shock of being discovered by the only relation she had in the world who would now acknowledge her,

her, in a state of penury so very evident, still further rallied her spirits ; and smiling through her tears, endeavoured to lessen the concern the Marquis, her cousin, could but ill conceal.

“ Fate considers me as a Viralva still, you find,” said she : “ but I will, if possible, like you, my dear Julio, endure her persecutions with the fortitude which has characterized so many heroes of our race. Yet I must feel and express an apprehension, that as you expected to find Ruvello and myself in the affluence from which we have been so suddenly dashed, you may have relied——”

“ No, my amiable cousin, no,” replied he : “ having been disappointed in my views at Venice, as you already knew, I was meditating upon the removal which the letter of your husband scarcely hastened a day. For you alone I grieve—for you who merit a destiny so different ! Have you not informed your uncle of this cruel reverse ?”

She shook her head in silence.

“ Ah Rosaura,” resumed he, “ he is then what I so truly guessed, though you with a generous candour have ever defended his character from my strictures, which you thought I believe severe. Alas ! I perceived but too well in the passing visit I stole last year from my duty, that his heart was impenetrable to every thing attractive and good, since he loved you not : and when I heard of this journey to Naples, I feared that it was merely meant to dispose of you to the suitor who could make your fortune, and mend their’s, without attending to your welfare or your inclinations !”

“ My cousin, let us not think too harshly of him still,” said Rosaura with a sigh : “ it is a painful subject—let us dismiss it ! Tell me what accidental circumstance induced you to follow the boy I employed ?”

“ The family of your husband refused to reply to my eager enquiries,” returned
he :

he: "they appeared to be equally vain and worthless. I was, however, directed to the house of a merchant, where you had resided some time since; but there I could still obtain no intelligence of your actual situation, and I began to be extremely apprehensive that I should not discover your retreat, when this morning, about an hour back, the boy accosted me at the entrance of the Corso, and entreated that I would purchase some trifle from his basket: but I refused his petition, roughly I believe, for I was chagrined and disconcerted at my fruitless pursuit; yet the boy would not quit my side, and with a mien of earnest persuasion, offered me several articles, the taste and construction of which I had reason to remember, since you presented me last year with a purse, a porte-feuille, and several other things, exactly upon the same model with those that now met my eye. My attention being arrested, I questioned him whilst I examined his merchandise, in which I discovered several ornaments and toys of
straw,

straw, such as I had beheld adorning the cottage of old Antonio, who informed me they were constructed with a peculiar art you had learned at the Convent where you had resided.

“ Again and more minutely I examined your young agent—for as I had received intimations that Fortune had mal-treated you almost to the extent of her wanton power, I then suspected him to be such ; and his replies and evasions, ingenious though they were, confirmed my surmises. I would have bribed him to conduct me to you, but he would not be bribed ; and as he had appeared so particularly anxious to dispose of his little merchandise, I then insisted that he should not proceed in his efforts to that effect, until he disclosed the residence of *the lady* who employed him : for this intelligence my repeated and varied enquiries had produced. And now, my dear Rosaura, my cousin, my sister—for as a sister my heart is attached to you—you must allow your poor Julio the happiness of sharing with
you

you the little superfluity which fortune in a mood more favourable than usual, has entrusted to him."

"Ah no, my beloved Julio, my kind, my affectionate brother," interrupted Rosaura, "let not the pleasure which this meeting gives my heart, be sullied by a request from you which I will not, I cannot comply with."

"You have acknowledged yourself to be a Viralva still," said he, "spite of your change of name, and you have called me brother—why then this unkind reserve, my fair and luckless sister in misfortune as in affection? When you found yourself in affluence, you called me to you to share your better destiny, and I obeyed the call. Would you, Rosaura, that I should prove such a miscreant as to quit you now, because your fortune is changed, though your heart retains its kindness in my favour!"

"You will never act thus, Julio! But reflect that I offered you only the superfluity I could well spare, whilst you would
force

force upon me what you cannot do without ; although you may perceive," she added, smiling, " that as I am industrious, and have so faithful and assiduous an agent as Antonino, I may shortly become as rich as the poor Marquis di Viralva, who would ere now have been overwhelmed by penury and many a cold Alpine blast, had not the generous blood that warmed his proud heart, bid it beat in spite of calamity !"

" That boy is inestimable !" exclaimed Viralva after a momentary reverie ; " where did you meet with him ?"

Rosaura replied that he was the brother of the only attendant she had retained in her service.

" And now tell me, my dear Julio," added she, " which of the family of my husband condescended so far as to direct you to the house of the good merchant Anselmo ?"

" A young lady," replied he, " to whom I was introduced, on my second
appli-

application at the habitation of her mother, Signora Alviano : she appeared extremely solicitous that I should succeed in discovering you, and begged very earnestly that I would contrive if possible to inform her of your welfare."

"It was the amiable Virginia," said Rosaura—"dear and affectionate girl! Was her mother then, Signora Alviano, totally uninterested in your enquiry?—did she not testify the remotest inclination to hear that I was yet in existence?"

"I beheld her only at my first application," returned he, "and she then coolly referred me to the Countess Almerini, who insolently replied to my demand, that you changed your abode so often and so suddenly, that she would not venture to assert that she knew it—that the last time she had sought you out, you were in a nook so obscure, and the way to it was so intricate, that she could not recollect it all sufficiently to give me a proper indication.—Perhaps her servants
could,

could, I observed to her. She had thought proper to conceal from her servants, she said, that she was seeking in such a den, any one allied to her family. I left her in extreme disgust, and returned to the house of Signora Alviano, who was not at home I learned ; but as I was turning from the door, a Cameriere followed me to enquire if I were the Marquis of Viralva ; and on my reply, he desired I would enter the house, where I should obtain the intelligence I sought.

“ I did enter it, and was conducted to a saloon, where I beheld the lovely girl you call Virginia, who spoke of your virtues, your misfortunes, your patience under them, your beauty, and the envy it had excited, and of the enemies the superior qualities of your mind had raised against you : the fair creature wept as she recounted what you had endured ; but the indignant glow of her cheek dried up her tears when she mentioned that her mother refused her supplications to be
allowed

allowed to see you, and had joined the phalanx who persecuted and slandered you. I confess to you, my beloved cousin, that although I more than shared the nobleresentment your amiable Virginia testified, yet I thought not at that moment of expressing it, but was wholly intent upon dissipating the sorrow, the ingenuous shame she displayed at the cruelty and injustice of her mother: I even ventured to assert that you could not suffer yourself to experience any decrease of affection for her, neither could your most zealous friends allow the admiration she must ever excite, to be checked by the conduct of Signora Alviano; but on the contrary, they must revere her that she would not permit the maternal influence which she evidently respected, or the prejudices of her associates, to overcome her sense of justice, or expel from her heart an object worthy of its generous attachment."

"You did well, my dear Julio, in
assuring

assuring her that my affection for her could know no diminution—and shall I say that I *fear* the admiration she has evidently excited, cannot easily be checked! Oh my cousin, beware of this dangerous Virginia! The fire that now sparkles in your eye, and animates every feature, the pleasing emotion with which you retrace a scene where she so well displayed the candour of her nature, and evidenced its gentle goodness by her tears, are enemies to your peace, and you must conquer and expel them.”

“A soldier,” said Viralva, smiling, “must not shrink from an ambushed danger, and he must endure every wound that fate inflicts, with fortitude and patience.”

“But he may guard against an ambushed danger,” retorted Rosaura; “and though he may not fear a wound, he must not seek one that would render him an invalid for years perhaps: that would be madness, my dear Julio, not courage!

I will

I will myself undertake to inform Virginia of my welfare——”

“ In this my word is at stake,” interrupted he hastily ; “ for I pledged it that I would not fail to carry her the intelligence she requested relating to your situation, your wishes, and your views. And let me not forget to tell you, since she requested it, that she still cherishes you with grateful tenderness, and turns with disgust from those societies where you are no longer seen, and where your merit is so little understood. Something further she certainly intended to say ; but after a considerable hesitation, she referred to another interview, and I then left her, because she appeared fearful that her mother would return, and surprise her with me.”

“ I earnestly wish that a second interview may not take place,” returned Rosaura : “ Oh Julio, guard your heart against the seductions of love !—for how would a poor soldier like you, with only
honour

honour and integrity to recommend your character, and only your sword and high descent to support your pretensions, how would you be regarded by such a woman as Signora Alviano, as a suitor to her daughter !—with what insolent scorn would she not reject your plea !”

“ No, my fair cousin,” exclaimed Julio with a heightened colour on his cheek, “ such a woman as Signora Alviano, were her daughter an angel, should never reject a descendant of the Viralvas—nor will I subject myself to her insolence or her scorn ! Calm your generous inquietudes, and I will confess to you that I admire the fair Virginia, and I could love her, that she loves you. But ere now, Rosaura, I have stifled the throes of a rising passion, and made an offering of the conquered traitor to the meagre deity that hovers with such jealous vigilance over our house. I will see Virginia once more, and think of her only, if possible, as the daughter of Signora Alviano.”

“ Ah

“ Ah no, that is not possible,” returned she, “ nor do I wish it. Esteem her, my dear Julio ; let your opinion do justice to her merit, to her excellence, but do not become the victim of them !——And now tell me your plans—or rather tell me what they were when you directed your course to this place—now I fear they are necessarily suspended, if not wholly deranged !”

“ Not by any alteration in your destiny,” replied he ; “ but that I understand here, that I shall obtain both employment and promotion with very little difficulty in the service of Spain ; and I have already received promises that I shall at any time be provided with letters of recommendation, by two or three Neapolitan Noblemen I became known to at Venice. When therefore, I can have the happiness of seeing you in a situation in some small degree adapted to your merits and your rank, I will pursue my precarious fortune, and court her smiles at Madrid.”

“ You must not, my dear Julio,” said

Rosaura,

Rosaura, "attempt to wait any favourable change in my destiny; but you must be contented to hear of it when you shall have obtained a Spanish regiment, and then you will be able to return information equally pleasing with that I shall send you."

Viralva would not however consent to quit Naples so soon as Rosaura thought necessary on many accounts; and they were still contesting the point, when Maria entered to say that Signora Merchini entreated to be admitted to her Lady.

"This is indeed an unexpected and unhopèd-for a pleasure!" exclaimed Rosaura, hastily rising to meet her: whilst Signora Merchini having as eagerly advanced to embrace her, cast a rapid glance at the apartment and its penurious furniture, and burst into tears.

"Do not sully the happiness you bestow," said Rosaura, "by a compassionate sympathy in my reverse of fortune, too distressing to yourself not to reflect back

back a pang to the heart you would wish to sooth and cheer !”

“ I am acting very weakly,” returned Signora Merchini, “ and you justly reprove me, my amiable, my much-injured friend.”

At this moment the figure of Viralva caught her eye, and starting with an emotion of surprise and dismay, she turned an enquiring regard towards Rosaura, who replied to it by announcing his name and affinity to her.

The manner of her fair visitor was now however, constrained and embarrassed ; and Viralva justly imagining that his presence must have occasioned this change of aspect and deportment, though he could not divine wherefore, bade Rosaura adieu, and told her that he would renew his visit in the evening.

“ I deprive you of the society of your cousin,” said Signora Merchini ; “ and give you only a poor and momentary compensation in mine ! I have studied

that cold and repelling air that drives every one from me, and I regret very little the dislike of the multitude; but some few beings exist whose good opinion and whose friendship I would fain cherish with assiduous care—yet this cannot be! You, my beloved Signora Ruvello, are the first on this small list, and had I been allowed the direction of my own time, or had I been indulged in the appropriation of any part of the dwelling I inhabit, I should not in the one instance have been thus tardy in seeking you; and in the other, one roof should have sheltered us both. But you know, alas! that I am in truth a slave; and from the abhorred moment in which you were in the hour of your distress so cruelly denied access to me, I have doubly felt the galling chain I am doomed to wear—it crushes my soul, and sinks me to despondence and complete despair!”

Rosaura much affected by the accent and the countenance, that too strictly
corre-

corresponded with the concluding sentence, endeavoured to inspire her luckless guest with some degree of courage to support her evil fate, and still more earnestly endeavoured to afford her consolation under its malignancy.

“ You are indeed the amiable, the generous creature I ever thought you !” exclaimed Signora Merchini : “ you sooth my griefs—why cannot I alleviate your’s ? This moment, this little moment is all I can steal, to receive the comfort you offer ! I must be gone—yet let me first apply a touchstone to the regard and affection you so kindly profess for me. This dress is nothing to me, except that it may reflect to my heart a few gleams of pleasure, if the hope I have be just, that you will apply it to your use, and think it a small resource, drawn from the superfluity of a sister less mal-treated by fortune than yourself, but still more bruised by a calamity of a more insupportable nature ! Does my friend refuse the test ? Oh

Rosaura! why this shrinking reluctance to me, who feel myself scarcely more drawn towards you by the amiable qualities I love and admire, than by the sorrows which should more intimately approach us to each other!"

"I should not experience any reluctance to take what the friendship and liberality of Signora Merchini offer," replied Rosaura, "were I assured that she were a free agent. But perhaps——"

"In this instance then, I am a free agent," interrupted she: "you may indeed discover it by the trifle I offer. Hesitate no longer, my sister, my friend, or you will draw too largely on the limited moment I am allowed, in a controversy that grieves and mortifies me."

Rosaura pressed the hand that would not be repulsed, and accepted its gift.

After a few moments of further conversation, Signora Merchini intimating that it was not probable she should remain much longer in Naples, embraced her friend, and withdrew.

Rosaura

Rosaura sighed on recollecting the hopeless melancholy that was now indelibly stamped on her fine aspect; and having offered an ardent prayer for her future peace and happiness, she reflected with gratitude to Heaven and Signora Merchini, upon the amendment of her own situation. The purse contained about a hundred crowns; and with this sum and the exertion of her industry, she hoped without much difficulty, to be enabled to continue the necessary efforts to obtain the pension, and likewise to exist with frugality.

CHAP. IV.

THE first use Rosaura made of the donation of her friend, was to enclose the sum the Procuratore had affected to advance for her in a small packet, which she sent to him by Antonino, accompanied by a billet to entreat some information of his movements in her favour, and the degree of success that had attended them.

Maria meantime, from whom her Lady would not withhold the knowledge of the gleam of sunshine that illumined her prospects, was now all gaiety and smiles; and her happiness reflected a further satisfaction to the heart of Rosaura, who heard
on

on the return of her young agent, that the Procuratore would attend her the next day at an early hour.

The whole evening Rosaura vainly expected the promised visit from Viralva ; and she feared that he was detained from her by the hope of repeating his interview with Virginia ; her surmise was confirmed the following morning by Viralva himself, who presented to her soon after his entrance, a letter from her young friend, containing the warmest professions of an affection which their enforced separation and the misfortunes of Rosaura, she said, had only increased.

“ Oh how much,” continued Virginia, “ have I regretted the absence of Count Orvino, since he alone, I believe, could have influenced my mother, to offer you some little reparation for the injustice I deplore. Do not condemn or despise me, beloved Signora Ruvello, for that which already wounds me to the soul ; and tell

Count Orvino, when you see him or write to him, that Virginia detests the thought of revelling in the spoils of a distressed friend, and hopes on a future day to restore what she would never call her's, but in this consoling prospect."

"Who is Count Orvino?" demanded Viralva, as Rosaura, in imparting the letter to him, read these sentences.

"The most favoured and deserving of Signor Ruvello's friends," replied she: "and I believe, the husband designed by her family for Virginia."

"This happy destination does not displease her I perceive," said Viralva.

"She thinks very highly of the merits of the Count," returned Rosaura, affecting not to remark his altered tone and countenance; "but not with more enthusiasm than they deserve to create!"

"Indeed!—he is then a phoenix! And—your other friend, my dear cousin, the lady who yesterday so plainly demonstrated

strated that she wished me on the summit of the Alps—you appeared rejoiced to see her !”

“ I was rejoiced indeed—she is one of the most amiable of women !”

“ I will endeavour to believe it on your assertion ; but whence arose her sudden and palpable dislike to your unlucky Julio ?”

“ Not dislike,” returned Rosaura, “but a painful consciousness of restraint, entirely uncongenial with her disposition.”

“ Has she then lately commenced her career of prudery ?”

“ Yes ; but that she commenced it at all, is from necessity, not choice : her husband should have been nurtured at Madrid, or have resided here nearly a century back—for his propensity to suspicion and jealousy renders her miserable. I mention this, my dear cousin, that if chance should again conduct you here at the same moment with her, you may relieve her anxious embarrassment by kindly

retiring, since if Signor Merchini should discover that she had remained in the society of any young man less formed to please than the Marquis di Viralva, it would subject her to the most injurious reproaches, and deprive me of the consolation her future visits would afford me."

Viralva, after execrating the husband, readily promised to relieve the distress of the unfortunate wife, as far as his single power extended.

Rosaura then again urged his prompt departure for Spain, assuring him that in the kind solicitude of Signora Merchini, she had found an ample resource against the miseries of indigence: and to prove the assertion, she produced the gift of her friend.

"Why," exclaimed Viralva, "would you mortify me, by thus accepting from another what you refused to receive from me! In the hope that I should yet prevail with you to share the purse of your brother, I refused to charge myself with
what

what Virginia pressed me, with tears and entreaties almost irresistible, to induce you to take from her, and now this Signora Merchini is preferred to me!"

When Rosaura had paid a tribute of gratitude to Virginia, she soothed the generous displeasure of her cousin, and her arguments at length appeased him. A few moments after, he started two or three enquiries concerning Count Orvino, in which his imagination evidently reverted to Virginia Alviano; but he was induced, by the representation of Rosaura, to promise that he would in two days embark for Spain, and that he would not in the interim renew an intercourse which might irritate Signora Alviano against her daughter, and even against Rosaura herself, were it discovered.

Soon after this engagement had passed his lips, Viralva was leaving her to prepare as he said, for his departure, when Maria announced the Marquis D'Asavoli, who entered with an air of great alacrity,

which was evidently checked on perceiving that Rosaura was not alone.

She presented her cousin however, to the Marquis, who received and returned his salutation with an affected satisfaction, and the conversation for some time was of a general nature, owing to the assiduity of Asavoli to render it so : but at length Viralva taking advantage of a momentary pause, addressed himself gravely to the Marquis.

“ I think,” said he, “ you were present when I urged Signora Alviano to inform me where I might seek my injured cousin. You could have obliged me inexpressibly by directing me to her it seems ; but for a reason not easily guessed at, you withheld your knowledge of her abode from me.”

“ I awaited your unobserved attention,” replied Asavoli, “ which I could not obtain : since you thus call upon me in the presence of Signora Ruvello to explain the motive of my conduct, in her presence I am compelled to say that her habitation
5 being

being so infinitely beneath her rank and her merit, I was unwilling that the giddy throng who at that moment surrounded us, should learn to what an extent the blind injustice of Fortune could transport her."

Viralva appeared extremely dissatisfied with this lame exculpation : but Rosaura who dreaded any protracted dissertation upon the subject, intimated her approbation of the delicacy observed by the Marquis, and her cousin dropped any further animadversion upon it.

Asavoli immediately congratulated her upon the near prospect there appeared of obtaining the pension she condescended to solicit, and assured her that in a fortnight at furthest, it would be assigned to her, as the Queen had been interested in her favour, and had been actively solicitous to procure this trifling alleviation of the undeserved misfortunes of Signora Ruvello.

This intelligence so welcome to Rosaura,
softened

softened likewise the jealous reserve of her cousin, whose mien became considerably less hostile and suspicious: he appeared determined however, not to quit Rosaura whilst Asavoli remained, and at length proposed to him to adjourn to the Corso, which the Marquis assented to, and they departed together.

But as they were quitting the house, the carriage of Signora Merchini drew up to it; and though Viralva would have passed her, the Marquis D'Asavoli observing that she was unattended but by her servants, eagerly seized the pretext to return with her to Rosaura, and officiously offering his assistance, Viralva thought he could not then avoid turning back with them.

Signora Merchini was inexpressibly distressed at the assiduity of both, as her servants whom she knew to be mere spies upon her motions, witnessed it, and desired that she might not be the occasion of detaining either Cavalier in a place they
had

had intended to quit, enforcing her entreaty by asserting that she wished for a private conference with Signora Ruvello: an intimation she more particularly addressed to Asavoli, because he appeared of the two, the more pertinaciously troublesome.

The Marquis was much and evidently piqued to be thus excluded in spite of the efforts he had made; but was compelled to retreat by a declaration so unreserved, and Viralva again accompanied him.

“How unfortunate that I was not a few minutes later!” exclaimed Signora Merchini: “but I will not distress you, my amiable friend, by perpetual complaints! I am now come, Rosaura, to bid you a long farewell; for I have consented—indeed I proposed to my husband to quit this country, and retire to another, where the manners and customs of the inhabitants will better accord with his sentiments, and spare me perpetual altercation and disgust, by removing

removing every subject of distrust and suspicion from his mind.

“Whither is this unhappy and mistaken man conducting you?” demanded Rosaura in extreme alarm.

“I will write shortly, and then you shall learn,” replied her fair visitor: “the indulgence of corresponding with a female friend, will in future I am told be allowed me. Spare me any remonstrance, my beloved Signora Ruvello; I am merely in quest of a peaceful solitude, and I turn my back upon a world where I have found only disquietude and misery! As a memento of our mutual friendship, take this little resemblance, and with it these foolish baubles; but suffer not these last to remain useless in your hands—that is not my design in offering them to your acceptance.”

Rosaura strenuously refused her assent to this generous proposition, and would retain only the picture; but as her unhappy friend was extremely earnest to
force

force the diamonds, for such they were, into her possession, the controversy was both long and warm.

The inflexibility of Rosaura however, was not to be overcome ; and Signora Merchini much disappointed and chagrined, at length recollected that she had exceeded the time allowed her for this parting visit, and was compelled to hasten away with such abruptness, that Rosaura had not an opportunity of again urging the enquiry concerning her destination.

She was extremely grieved to relinquish the hope that she entertained from the first visit, of sometimes being enabled to sooth the afflictions of a woman so deserving, and who was so capable of experiencing and inspiring friendship. Rosaura felt likewise an extreme anxiety to learn whither she was to be conveyed by the caprice and humour of her husband ; for she could not avoid suspecting that the retirement of which she had spoken, was a strict monastic prison, whither she
believed

believed Signora Merchini to be impelled by weariness and despair.

At length however, the thoughts of Rosaura reverted insensibly from the situation and prospects of her friend, to her own; and if, as the Marquis D'Asavoli had asserted, she was on the point of obtaining a sufficient competency for Ruvello and herself, she earnestly wished to impart the circumstance to him, and rejoin him wherever he might be: the uncertainty of his present abode distressed her, and his total silence by confirming the intelligence of Count D'Astia, at once alarmed and shocked her. Spite of the prohibition of Dame Beatrice, she had just determined to send Maria once more, in the hope of procuring a letter, when the entrance of the Procuratore suspended her departure for the moment.

He repeated to Rosaura with many grimaces of satisfaction, the intelligence already detailed by the Marquis D'Asavoli; and thanking her for the punctuality with
which

which she had repaid the trifle he had had the honour of advancing for her, affirmed that thirty crowns more would accomplish the business.

Rosaura startled at these repeated demands, which he had now no reason to believe it in her power to comply with, and for the necessity of which she had only his word, hesitated for a few seconds, and was considering if it would not be expedient to enquire more minutely into the manner in which the sums she had already parted with had been employed, since she had still the legal demands of the Procuratore to discharge, when affecting to recollect himself, he presented to her a memorandum to that effect; and whilst she was looking it over, a billet was brought to her by Maria from Countess Almerini, which confirmed to her beyond a doubt, that the pension, if not already assigned, would be so immediately: the billet was to this effect.

“ I con-

“ I congratulate you, Signora, that your merit has procured you so powerful and generous a patroness, that what you solicit, and she supports with her influence, must of necessity be granted.

“ I have to wish and request that when you are restored to the advantages naturally appertaining to your rank, you will return to the society of your friends, from which a too scrupulous delicacy has lately detained you : and be assured that whatever little petulance I may have betrayed, was excited only by my impatience at your apparent inactivity ; and had you deigned to inform me of the important and effectual movements which were in agitation, I should not only have highly approved them, but have expedited them to the utmost of my power.

“ Yet however ignorant you may have
thought

thought proper to leave me of your designs and plans, I rejoice at their complete success, and shall ever remain most devotedly, your cousin and servant,

“ C. M. ALMERINI.”

Rosaura having hastily cast her eye over this performance of the Countess, began to accuse herself of forming a very unjustifiable opinion both of her Procuratore, and of the veracity of the Marquis D'Asavoli.—“ They have assuredly and effectually served me,” thought she, “ and I have requited them by the most illiberal suspicions !”

“ Signor Dottore,” said she, folding the letter, “ I have it very fortunately in my power to answer your request for these thirty crowns ; and whilst I do so, I must thank you for the assiduity and success of your efforts in my favour.”

“ I have merely had the satisfaction of performing

performing my duty," replied he: "to the Marquis D'Asavoli the Signora Ruvello is indebted for the most active as well as disinterested exertions. But though I cannot so far comply with his wishes and injunctions, as to be wholly silent on that head, I entreat that what you now learn from me may not be repeated, lest it should reach his knowledge, and wound the delicacy of his feelings."

Rosaura could not but suspect that the delicacy of the Marquis was rather over-rated; but being warmly urged by the Procuratore not to express either to himself or to others, the obligation she would no doubt equally feel, she assented to his request.

She then produced the sum demanded of her, and the Procuratore soon after made his bow, leaving his fair client under the subjection of a new inquietude: the conduct and language of the Marquis had been so equivocal, that she feared she was not acting entirely with propriety,
in

in accepting through his medium a benefit of such importance: yet she reflected that it was equally intended for the advantage of her husband, and that his family would never forgive what they would denominate her fastidiousness, in objecting to any channel through which the stigma of helpless poverty might be withdrawn from Ruvello and herself. This pension would likewise elevate her above the machinations not only of the Marquis himself, but of other unprincipled men, who in her present situation would think themselves entitled to insult her with impunity, because it might place her in the view and under the protection of the society, whose opinions they were in some degree compelled to respect. Thus far certainly the Marquis appeared to have acted with disinterestedness and generosity !

“ But where is now Ruvello ? ” exclaimed she : “ why will he not give me an opportunity of imparting to him my wishes, my hopes, and my successful struggles

struggles against a tide of adversity which a few days back I feared would overwhelm me? Can it be that he forgets his birth and himself, by associating with gamblers and adventurers, who can but poorly gild the passing moment, whilst they deprive him for ever of his honour and his peace? Vainly will the generous friendship of Orvino impel him to seek the misguided exile, should he be indeed thus lost—and I fear, alas! the too impetuous and facile temper of Ruvello may have betrayed him to share in errors almost irretrievable, if not in guilt! Why was I not allowed the time I so earnestly solicited, to become acquainted with the disposition of his mind! I might then have discerned the rock on which my happiness is now split, ere an act solemn and irremediable——Yet away with impious repinings, with unprofitable regrets! Give me, oh Heaven! a more patient resignation to thy decrees, and let me not aggravate the ill I ought calmly to endure! I will immediately
send

send my faithful Maria to the house of the worthy Anselmo? she may now perchance bring me the intelligence I so earnestly wish for, and she may now venture I think, to inform the domestics of my retreat, that any letter that may in future be received, may immediately be forwarded to me."

Maria with her usual alacrity, readily consented to encounter once more the angry suspicions of Dame Beatrice; and in her absence, Rosaura amused herself with settling her account with Antonino, whose services she thought herself at present well authorized to remit; and she likewise presented to him what yet remained of the unsold stock, that he might dispose of it for the benefit of his family.

She then began a letter of affectionate acknowledgment to Virginia, which she hoped to be enabled to transmit to her very shortly; but before she had concluded the first sentence of it, Maria

burst into the room with an aspect of great glee, and her breath much shortened by the speed she had used.

“ Here is a packet at last, Signora !” exclaimed she : “ a Cavalier brought it to Naples, and left it with old Annibal, who would take it in, in spite of Dame Beatrice and all her ill-nature. I have told him where the Cavalier may call for an answer, and I dare say it will not be long before he comes ; for he told old Annibal that he was leaving Naples directly, and would return to him in two hours at furthest, in the hope of hearing something of you—and so the poor old man was just going to carry the packet to Countess Almerini.”

Rosaura heard not the remainder of this sentence, for she had already torn open the letter, and was earnestly reading the contents.

“ What is the matter, Signora ?” resumed the girl : “ I hope it’s not bad news !

news ! I am sure you have had sorrow enough. Dear me, I wish I had not been in such a hurry to bring it to you !”

“ No, my dear Maria, no,” said Rosaura, “ not very bad—nothing——Will you, for a few moments—will you retire—I wish to be undisturbed !”

“ Call me back soon, Signora,” returned she in a sympathizing accent : “ do not stay long by yourself. Signora, I can cry with you, if I cannot comfort you—pray call me back soon !”

“ I will,” replied her Lady : “ but for the present go.”

Maria obeyed.

“ Oh imprudent Ruvello !” exclaimed Rosaura, clasping her hands, and suffering the letter to fall from them, “ it is then true ! You have allowed yourself to be the dupe, and what is infinitely worse, the associate of adventurers—but your request must be granted as far as my power extends, and fortunate may I think myself that I am not compelled to

suffer this Cavalier, this *friend* you call him, to return to you without the succour you so much need ! When this pension is decreed to me, what prohibition shall have power to detain me from you—for I will yet save you if you will suffer me !”

With the activity of mind that was usual to her, when any act of benevolence was to be accomplished, Rosaura allowed not an unnecessary moment to elapse ere she performed it ; but resolutely stripped herself of all that remained of the bounty of Signora Merchini, within the slender sum of six crowns, to send to her improvident husband, who represented himself to be wholly destitute of money, and effects of any kind, owing to the villany of a crew of freebooters, who had artfully produced to him vouchers and evidences of their rank, apparently so well authenticated, that his circumspection had been completely lulled, and he had become their prey : he had travelled, he said, to
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the confines of the kingdom he was forbidden to enter, that he might be as near as possible to those who alone would send him assistance, and which he should never have had the power of demanding or of awaiting, had he not been aided by the friendly offices of the Cavalier who would deliver to Rosaura the letter she then read.

He then requested that she would not yet remove from Naples, whatever fate might have decreed for them.—“ I can now only allow myself,” concluded Ruvello, “ to hope that you will receive some pension from a Government so obstinate; my possessions I know I shall never recover. You shall hear further from me very shortly—in the interim, my friend will mention to you my wishes with respect to the conduct I desire you to pursue, to advance the broken fortunes of your husband.”

To this letter she returned an answer of consolatory kindness; and lamenting that

she could not convey to him all the aid her heart would have prompted, related in what manner she had employed those of her jewels he possibly imagined to be still in her possession; and bewailed the selfish depravity of human nature, whilst she stated the cruel abandonment of her uncle and his wife, so immediately after having received from her a benefit she acknowledged she ought not to have afforded them without his sanction. She entreated his forgiveness for having done so, and expressed her earnest wishes that she might have the power of atoning for her imprudence, by paying an unremitting attention, in future, to his convenience and happiness.

CHAP. V.

SHE had scarcely concluded her letter, and made up her packet, when the friend of Ruvello, in consequence of the direction he had received from old Annibal, claimed admittance to her.

Rosaura felt her heart palpitate as this man entered her apartment, which he surveyed with evident sensations of dismay ; but soon turning his regards upon her he sought, his aspect instantly changed to a surprise and admiration, from which she shrunk abashed and disgusted ; for the turn of his features displeased, and their expression shocked her.

With an involuntary and almost unconscious respect, he made the accustomed salutation, whilst Rosaura from a sensation of superiority equally intuitive, recovered to her usual ease of deportment, mingled with a dignity her visitor seemed to feel.

“ The commission I received from Signor Ruvello is my passport here,” said he: “ allow me to hope, Signora Illustrissima, that it is not an unwelcome one.”

“ I most earnestly wished for intelligence from my husband,” replied Rosaura, “ and I thank you, Signor, that you have taken so much trouble in seeking my humble abode to afford it me. He writes to me that he is indebted to your humanity and friendship—that obligation I must equally share, and I desire to assure you of my gratitude.”

The Cavalier bowed in reply to this compliment, with an air not wholly free from conscious embarrassment; and Rosaura then reverted to that part of the letter

letter of Ruvello, in which he desired her to learn of this friend of his, those plans he had not stated the nature of, where her assistance or her concurrence was requisite.

“ You have I believe, a pension,” returned the Cavalier ; “ and you have likewise diamonds of value—or perhaps the pension may not yet be granted ? ”

“ I expect that it will be confirmed to me almost immediately,” replied she : “ the diamonds are no longer in my possession, and I have mentioned to my husband in what manner they were disposed of ! ”

His countenance fell as she uttered this ; but after a pause, he enquired if she could not ascertain with tolerable exactness, the time in which the pension would be assigned to her.

“ Not positively,” replied she, “ but I imagine in less than a fortnight.”

“ My friend, Signor Ruvello,” resumed the Cavalier, “ has now the power of

purchasing a very advantageous and lucrative post, could he obtain the sum required : it is his wish therefore, that you mortgage this pension, which I will assist you to do to the best advantage, that he may obtain the post that offers itself, which is a place of trust about the person of one of our Italian Princes, the Duke di Medina ; and it will lead to still greater advantages.”

“ I understand,” said Rosaura, “ that you quit Naples this day—how then——”

“ I am indeed compelled to return with great expedition, from whence I came,” interrupted he : “ but the affair, though urgent, will soon be settled, and I can revisit this place in a week or ten days.”

“ For Ruvello alone, do you undertake this second journey ?” demanded Rosaura with an aspect of grave enquiry.

“ Not entirely, Signora Illustrissima : “ but even though I did, my friendship for him and my respect for you, with whose character he has made me acquainted—
and

and I am now I think, enabled to judge that he has done so without the colouring of partial love—this respect and this friendship would carry me still further in your mutual service.”

Rosaura acknowledged this profession with a cold and silent motion.

“ You will return to Naples, Signor,” said she, “ sooner probably than will be entirely requisite, since though I have been taught to expect this pension in a fortnight, or even in a less time, it may possibly be much longer ere it be so well assured to me, as to enable me to dispose of it in the way you indicate. Nor can you feel offended if I should not think myself authorized to consent to so important a transaction, in which the entire subsistence of my husband as well as my own depends, without a positive and written order from Signor Ruvello, which of course I shall impart to his family, to justify a conduct they will otherwise have reason to condemn. The letter I have

addressed to my husband is in this packet, which I will not again open, that I may not detain you longer than your convenience may allow : but I will beg you to enquire of him in my name, if it would not be more prudent to retain one half or one third of the provision allotted to us by the bounty of our Sovereign, rather than part with the whole upon what may hereafter prove a casualty. Surely if the post you mention, be as lucrative and advantageous as he imagines it, any one of his friends, or his family connexions who possess the power, would advance the remainder of the sum required, to be reimbursed out of the revenue arising from it.

“ Yes—assuredly—I suppose so—but perhaps that plan may not entirely be approved by my friend : when I return, *Illustrissima*, I will bring you full instructions from Signor Ruvello upon the subject. Until you receive them, I think it would be right not to mention in
Naples

Naples the views of your husband, as perhaps they may vary, or he may give up his present design entirely. This packet I will deliver to him in two days; and in three or four days more I may possibly again have the honour of seeing you.—Until then I bid you adieu, but my respect and best wishes you will retain with you.”

Rosaura who felt an invincible repugnance to the countenance and manner of her visitor, did not urge his stay, and was rejoiced when he quitted her.

“Who is this man,” she exclaimed, “and what but self-interest can be his motive in the officious agency he would engage in! By what means can he have so suddenly formed a friendship with Ruvello of a nature so confidential and so intimate, that he receives from him pecuniary aid without apparent difficulty or unwillingness, and entrusts him with the knowledge of designs and plans which are to be guarded from the ear of his family!

Will

Will not this man likewise be discovered, too late, to have had interested and dishonest views ! His aspect is unfavourable to him in the extreme ; for it appears to portray a crafty mind and an impenetrable heart : my judgment however may do him injustice ; yet how hard to believe the one benevolent and the other open, when we read dark subtilty and caution in the eye, and see the lowering gloom of a brow that cannot without an effort be elevated. Oh Ruvello ! take from the hand of experience the prudent buckler which youth and candour would not think of providing, and suffer not the necessary means of existence to be snatched from you, whilst you are seeking the useless splendour you still sigh for !”

This was the ejaculation of Rosaura, who was yet in the spring of life, and until she was cast by the rude hand of adversity upon the unmasked nature of her high-bred associates, was candour itself ! But, alas ! she had only learned,
in

in sentences, to guard against the villany that plunders from an open hand, all that hand can bestow, since at the same moment she was herself a wrecked and defenceless prey to artifice and knavery.

She was yet ruminating upon the too probable motives of the man who had just left her, for affording to Ruvello the assistance and good offices he had spoken of, when Maria brought in her solitary dinner ; and whilst she was placing it to the best advantage before her pensive Lady, she enquired if Signor Ruvello were well, and if he said any thing of the good Count Orvino.

“ Your master is well,” replied Rosaura, suddenly occupying herself with her little repast.

“ And is Count Orvino well, Signora Padrona ?”

“ I fear,” returned she, “ that my husband will not be fortunate enough to meet with this generous and disinterested friend.”

“ Then

“Then invite the good Count back again to Naples,” exclaimed Maria eagerly: “for not only that I am sure his company will do you good, but I know that he will not let you work any more, or let that devilish Procuratore take your money away!”

Rosaura gently endeavoured to check the loquacity of her attendant, which did not arise she was convinced from pertness or insolence; but Maria pertinaciously adhered to the favourite object of her panegyric, and the dinner consequently remained almost untouched. When she remarked this, she suddenly ceased, and gazing upon her Lady with tearful eyes, began a lamentation which Rosaura interrupted by an entreaty that she would leave her to her reflections: and as her accent was indicative of the earnestness with which she wished it, Maria obeyed.

To the deepest abstraction her mind could fall into, Rosaura was indeed left: her closed eyes were covered by her hand
still

still further to exclude every outward object from her imagination, and the only world she was conscious of, soon consisted of the images and transactions depicted there.

She was suddenly however, awakened from this profound reverie, by finding her disengaged hand taken by a person at her side.

With an instinctive and repulsive motion, Rosaura instantly arose, and beheld the unlooked-for figure of the Duke di Brandosi bending forward to reach her lips.

At once astonished, indignant, and alarmed, words were for some moments refused her: and the Duke began an insinuating harangue which she interrupted when her recollection returned, to enquire who had given him admittance.

“ I did not perceive any of your domestics, Signora Ruvello,” returned he; “ and when your apartment was indicated to me——”

“ By

“ By whom indicated ?” demanded Rosaura, her indignation heightened by the insulting sneer she traced on his aspect.

“ To me a perfect stranger,” he replied, “ whose person is too uninteresting to be remembered, and therefore I cannot describe her. But why these angry interrogations, and that captious mien to a friend so zealous, so attached as myself ?”

“ You are not *my* friend, Duke di Brandosi—your conduct has ere now, both shocked and injured me; and you seem well inclined to add to the impression I have already received of your principles and your humanity !”

“ Signora Ravello,” exclaimed he, a rising flush of indignation colouring his aspect, “ you are a woman however charming in your person, and however superior in your mind, who will never long suffer the world to think well of you ! Throw off this shrewish humour, and let discretion govern the petulance
which

which not even your blooming beauty can induce us to support. Why are you thus insulated, if not by——”

“No matter why,” interrupted she in a tone of disgust and impatience; “insulated let me be! If destiny snatch from me the friend who cheers my sinking heart, the lapse shall not be supplied by one who has so cruelly insulted me!”

“And is fate then, snatching from you the friend who cheers your solitude—is this Venetian favourite departing?—this pretended cousin whose supposed relationship cannot impose upon the world!”

Rosaura who had alluded to Signora Merchini, was confounded at this false implication, and gazed at the Duke for a moment in astonishment.

“The Marquis di Viralva,” said she at length, “is well known: on this subject the utmost malignity of slander cannot hurt me with the world! And now retire, Duke di Brandesi—it cannot surely

surely be the province of a Cavalier of your rank and consideration——”

The Marquis di Viralva may be known,” interrupted he—“but, Signora Ruvello, there is a certain Adonis called Julio, who visits here, I find—who is charmed to meet his Rosaura—who flies to her arms—who is tenderly received—who remains for hours without reproach or dismissal from you !”

“I disdain to reply to calumny so gross and injurious,” returned Rosaura indignantly. “You have uttered it, and I have heard it—your object for the present therefore is attained—leave me.”

“No,” replied he: “I might indeed have left you to the sublimity of a virtue I should have thought it impossible to overcome; but since I find this virtue only a feint to give you the power of acting thus imperiously towards those you may not happen to prefer, I will myself chuse your retirement, and I will be the only visitor you receive in it.”

Rosaura

Rosaura now recollected the manner of his entrance, and experienced a sudden shock of terror both for herself and Maria, to whom she instantly called; but was not as usual, replied to, nor did Maria appear.

“Why this wild affright?” demanded her obnoxious guest: “I have neither killed nor gagged the wench—she has left the house!”

“Impossible!” exclaimed Rosaura.

“It is very possible, and she returns no more: this evening you will accompany me to a villa——”

“Not whilst I have breath,” interrupted she: “you may drag me hence lifeless——”

An altercation of voices now approached the room.

“What means this!” ejaculated the Duke.

“It is my Julio!” exclaimed Rosaura in an ecstasy. “Julio, hasten to your cousin!”

Viralva

Viralva at the same moment appeared, habited in a travelling dress; and on beholding the agitation of Rosaura, and the aspect of the Duke, which expressed as much guilt as surprise, he demanded the meaning of this scene.

“Why were you denied to me?” added he: “could it be you, my cousin, who instructed that woman to insist that you had quitted her house, and to repel me with insolence?”

“Ah surely not!” replied she: “but, my dear Julio, I will quit it now in your protection, and you will assist me in discovering whither my poor Maria has been conveyed.”

“By whom?” demanded Viralva impetuously—“and who is this Cavalier?”

“Young man, I am the Duke di Brandosi,” returned he: “the friend of this lady’s husband, and her friend, provided she sully not her fame by associating with adventurers.”

“The Duke di Brandosi!” repeated
Julio

Julio scornfully : “ I knew not that the Brandosi had obtained a Dukedom ; it is not many lustres back that the Brandosi were vassals to the house of Viralva—to that house whose chief is now insolently called an adventurer !”

“ The Brandosi vassals !” exclaimed the Duke : “ ’tis false—and to the Viralvi ! But you are not a Viralva—and if I spoke of adventurers, your conscience applied the term.”

“ In pity, my Julio, my friend, my brother !” interposed Rosaura, who was now fully aware of the consequence of this encounter, “ in pity to me, calm your ruffled mind—this intemperate heat afflicts me, and diminishes that superiority over himself which the injustice of the Duke di Brandosi gives to you, whom he thus wantonly outrages !”

“ Your presence here is unsolicited you find, illustrious Duke di Brandosi,” said Viralva.

“ *Your* presence here,” retorted the other,

other, “ may not be unsolicited, but it blights her fame, and brands her with infamy !”

“ Villain !” exclaimed Julio, “ come forth—come forth, and let me purge the earth of so foul a falsifier !”

In saying this, he grasped the shoulder of the Duke, who finding himself unequal to cope with his youthful opponent, endeavoured to draw some weapon from his bosom ; but Viralva closing with him, prevented his intention, and in the struggle they both fell to the ground : Viralva however, being the more strong and active, held the Duke firmly under him, and spite of his efforts to prevent it, searched his bosom for the stiletto he expected to find concealed, and Brandosi then enraged to madness, called for assistance against robbery and murder.

Vainly Rosaura still entreated each to forbear—her apprehensions and agonizing anxiety increased every moment, and at length, unknowing whence it came, she beheld

beheld a dagger in the hand of Viralva : this sight so unexpected and so horrible to her, overcame her weakened nerves, and she fell senseless on a couch that happily received her.

When she awoke from her trance, neither her cousin nor his adversary were in the place ; but she found herself surrounded by strangers, who told her that they had been charged to take care of her by the Duke, whilst he proceeded with the officers of justice to depose against the villain who would have pillaged and stabbed him.

“ He is not a villain—he is the Marquis di Viralva !” exclaimed she.

“ Whoever he be,” returned one of her attendants, “ he was found with a stiletto, which he was just going to strike into the heart of the Duke di Brandosi, after he had robbed him : but that three or four of the neighbours who came in, fell upon him at once, and snatched it away.”

“ By what fatal accident,” said Rosaura, clasping her hands, “ did that detested weapon happen to be in his possession ! He never carried one—he abhorred the idea of treachery or base revenge !”

“ Here is some iced water, Signora,” observed a woman holding it towards her : “ it will refresh you. Shall I get you any thing else ? No fear of its being paid for—his Excellency the Duke told us he would reward us all when he came back.”

At these words the recollection of Rosaura reverted to the scene which had immediately preceded the entrance of her cousin ; and hastily starting up, she demanded to see the woman of the house.

“ She is gone to depose what she saw and heard,” replied the first speaker : “ and you would have been taken likewise as a witness or an accomplice I believe, had not the Duke said you was a lady of honour, and not concerned in the action ; and then he begged us all to stay with
you

you until the woman came back, for fear you should be light-headed or frightened, and run about the streets."

"He was perhaps right," said Rosaura: "but you may perceive that his apprehensions are not realized. I am perfectly calm and collected. I thank you all—you will now retire; yet let me first present you with this trifle for your services."

One of the women took the offered money from her, but did not evince any intention of quitting the apartment, and Rosaura then began to fear that they had been bribed to watch her, under the plea of necessary attendance. After a few moments of reflection, she observed to them, that the scene she had witnessed had so much shocked her, that she could only regain her spirits by employing a short time in devotion, for which purpose she would withdraw into the small cabinet adjoining, and return when she had offered up her prayers.

No objection was made to this propo-

sition by her self-interested jailers, one of whom however, thought proper to look into the cabinet ere Rosaura entered it, who then shut the door upon them with a slow and steady motion, but with a palpitating heart.

This closet was narrow and obscure, and at the further end, communicated by a small door concealed by tapestry, with a passage that led to the staircase. Through this door Rosaura hastily glided, and finding every thing quiet before her, flew down the stairs, and gained the street, through which she passed with a trembling rapidity, her terror and confusion would not allow her to slacken, even when she had traversed many others: her temples now beat with violence from the disorder of her mind and the heat of the sun, against which she was only fenced by a slight veil, she was not sufficiently disengaged to arrange so as to shelter her eyes from the glare of its beams: she did not even seek the shade as she hurried
forward,

forward, but took whatever path presented itself.

Several Lazzaroni accosted her, to know if she had any commission she would entrust to them: but every voice that met her ear appeared to her to proceed from the agents of the Duke di Brandosi, and she eagerly avoided those who addressed her.

At length a faintness came over her, and instinctively she stretched out her hand for support, which was received by Antonino, who had followed her for some time in the utmost terror and distress, vainly entreating her commands, and imploring to know whither she wished to go, that he might shew her the way.

“Illustrissima, will you not go home?” asked the boy with tears in his eyes.

“No, no!” replied Rosaura, “hide me, hide me carefully—but run first, and tell them that a Viralva never was a villain, and that my cousin is innocent—

and then return and hide me—for the love of Heaven hide me in some hut or hole whence that detested Brandosi cannot drag me. I am implicated in the transaction, and I shall be taken to prison—but indeed Viralva is innocent, for he is not the villain they call him.”

Antonino now began to weep bitterly, and shortly after the senses of Rosaura wholly failed her.

CHAP. VI.

WHEN she recovered to a recollection of the past, and a perception of the scenes around her, she beheld herself enclosed in a place she could not imagine a name for : but she discerned at the same time, that she was amidst poor but zealous friends, who attended her with the most dutiful affection, and tendered their services with the most anxious alacrity.

“ It was indeed the family of Maria, and Maria herself was one of the group, who had been supporting the head of her beloved Lady as she slept.

“ You are returned to me then,” said

Rosaura, regarding her earnestly : “ why, Maria, did you abandon me ? ”

“ Oh my dear Lady ! ” returned the poor girl, bursting into tears, “ on that sad afternoon, as I sat at work in the outward room, a man who looked like a Lazzarone, came in all in a hurry, and asked if my name was Maria Benoni ; and when I told him that it was, he said that my young brother Antonino had met with an accident, and had sent him to call me to help him, for he was not far off. So I ran out without thinking what I was about, and he led me from street to street, saying it was only a step further, till he got me to a place where another of them was waiting, and then they both seized me, and dragged me into a house, where I was bound, and a cloth tied over my mouth that I might not call out : and in this place a woman staid to watch me ; but in the evening she grew tired of it, and went out, and then I made shift to free myself, and ran away. But as I was
afraid

afraid of being taken hold of again, and finding when I looked about me, that I was near my father's hut, I came here to tell them what had happened to me, and to ask my father to go back with me to you, my beloved Lady : and when I came, they told me you was here ! Antonino found you, my dear Lady ; and ever since you have not known us—not known your poor Maria !”

“ Ever since !” repeated Rosaura in a faint accent : “ was it not yesterday ?”

“ Oh no, my dear Lady, it is a week to-day,” returned Maria : “ but do not be sorry—and indeed you are quite safe—nobody has been here to see for you !”

Rosaura unable just then, from extreme weakness, to utter another word, closed her eyes, and reflected upon the strange scenes that in so contracted a space of time had driven her for shelter into the cabin of that Lazzarone, whose misery she had in the short-lived splendour she had been doomed to, pitied and relieved : but her ima-

nation soon reverted to her beloved cousin, cast into a prison, and suffering an ignominious punishment, from the vindictive baseness of the Duke di Brandosi.

“ Unhappy Julio !” sighed she, “ why was it ordained that I should be the luckless agent of such mischance to you, whom I love so well—that I should be the means of thus sullyng the name of Viralva !”

“ Do you mean the Cavalier, your cousin ?” asked Maria, who had listened in the idea that her Lady was indicating some wish : “ I hope yet, Signora, that he will not come to any harm.”

“ *Illustrissima*,” interposed the mother, “ you are yet very weak—allow your poor servant to advise that you remain for a little time still and quiet without thinking of these things, if you can help it. What shall I get for your breakfast, my beloved Lady—would you like a little coffee ? Maria has some money of your’s, and will get it in a minute.”

Rosaura,

Rosaura, who concluded that her faithful attendant had taken possession of her purse, having mentioned what she wished for, began to reflect as she lay, upon the slenderness of its contents, and that all the little remnant of her property was at the mercy of the woman who had proved herself the mere tool of the Duke di Brandosi.

“ I must rise, I must exert myself,” thought she : “ the pension may perhaps soon be given to me, it is true—but it is very probable that I shall not immediately derive any benefit from it. What then must I do to exist, without being a burthen to those who want, or a beggar to those who do not? I cannot alas, receive alms—and this man too, this friend of Ruvello will be seeking me! Yet if I make known where I am, the unprincipled wretch whose violence and injustice drove me here, will again pursue me!”

At length the renewed condescension of Countess Almerini occurred to her,

and Rosaura thought she might venture to solicit her protection at least for a short time. She was now earnest that Maria should procure her writing materials, and wished immediately to essay her strength by rising in her miserable bed : but after much dissuasion, and finding likewise that with every effort she could exert, it would be impossible for her to set up for ten minutes, she gave up the point for that day.

In the interim she would not send Maria to her, without a letter containing some kind of explanation, lest the Countess should again accuse her of affecting a conduct different from the rest of the world, and of that absurd romance that courts the appearance of a distress on which it loves to parade.

“Yet how,” exclaimed Rosaura, “could I have avoided what has happened to me ! Am I indeed, as Countess Almerini has said, more in fault than that destiny of which I complain—is this fatality originally

nally a phantom of my own imagination, and is it my misconduct alone that realizes the illusion my distempered fancy forms ?

In vain however, did Rosaura endeavour to trace her late mischance to such a source, nor could she perceive any other method than the one she had taken, to avoid the avowed designs of the Duke di Brandosi, whilst the senseless state into which she had fallen, after her accidental meeting with Antonino, would she hoped, even exonerate her from the censure of the Countess, for having been taken to the cabin of a Lazzarone instead of the Palace Almerini, where she believed she might have obtained admission.

With the careful attendance of Maria and her mother, she thought she found her strength increase in the course of four-and-twenty hours ; but she was likewise alarmed and anxious, on finding that the assistance not only of medicine, but

of one of its professors, had been procured by these poor people : he was far indeed, from being of the superior order of practitioners, yet in proportion as her terror decreased for the magnitude of his bills and fees, it increased for the re-establishment of her health, which she feared would not be much facilitated from want of skill.

The next morning therefore, spite of the entreaties of her humble friends, she scrawled in a hand scarcely legible, a very concise account of her late adventure, in which she wished to mark the villany of the Duke, to impress Countess Alme-rini with the innocence of Viralva, except of a momentary fury which the insults of his opponent would almost excuse : yet in writing this, the recollection of the dagger again shocked and staggered her.

“ Whence, whence came that horrid stiletto ! ” thought she — “ surely my cousin Julio never could wear the weapon of
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an assassin—impossible ! He is open, unsuspicious, and brave. Time only can develope this !”

Rosaura concluded the trembling lines she had with much difficulty traced, by mentioning that during an insensibility that seized her in her flight from her late habitation, where the Duke di Brandosi had apparently purchased the concurrence of the proprietor, she had been taken to an obscure little hovel, where a violent fever and delirium had detained her until that time ; but where she had been treated with the kindest and most respectful attention. Maria who was charged with the letter, would, she wrote, give the Countess a private intimation of her exact situation, as she feared to commit it to paper, lest by some accident the world should be apprized of it.

She wished to have further petitioned the Countess to send her some information concerning her expected pension ; but she was too weak and faint to guide her pen
any

any further, and the subject remained therefore untouched upon.

On receiving her instructions, Maria promised to use every effort in her power, to be introduced to Countess Almerini herself, and only to impart to her ear the actual situation of her Lady. When she had left the hut upon this mission, the mind of Rosaura, which had too many subjects of anxiety to work upon, to allow her any uninterrupted repose, reverted to the necessity of giving either Ruvello or his agent, immediate information of her change of residence; but as she was not yet certain if the Countess would receive her into her's, she was compelled to await her reply ere she even proposed to herself any measure to effect this with the celerity she wished. Yet she was tortured with the apprehension that her husband might again send his friend to her, and imagine upon the report of this man, that she had purposely withdrawn from his claims upon her justice and affection.

At

At length Maria returned, after an interval her Lady had thought miserably tedious and lingering.

“ Did you see Countess Almerini ? ” demanded Rosaura, in a voice not less tremulous from weakness than eagerness.

“ Yes, Signora, I saw her,” replied Maria, averting her eyes—“ I saw her—and—she told me——”

“ You have a letter perhaps,” interrupted Rosaura, with an impatience she could not restrain.

“ Yes, my dear Lady, I have a letter—but—but she is a bad-hearted, malicious woman,” added Maria, her voice bursting suddenly into an accent of rage ; “ and I wish she would meet with misfortunes herself, and then she would know what it was to be taunted instead of being pitied and helped ! ”

“ Woe is me ! ” ejaculated Rosaura mournfully : “ and could she, Maria, could she indeed, find in her heart to taunt the extremity of wretchedness to which

which I am now reduced!—hard must that heart be, and callous to the moan of sorrow, and the cry of despair. Oh creature of the hour, that will appear only with a sunbeam, and withdraw with its rays, the miserable object of your scorn will henceforth dismiss you from her recollection, or regard you only as she would the insect you resemble! Rosaura di Viralva can die, but not a second time can she solicit the hand that rejects her!”

“Ah no, my beloved Lady, you must not die!” exclaimed Maria weeping: “be comforted—things will turn out better than you think for: let me burn this nasty letter, and do not read it!”

“Give it me,” said Rosaura: “I will not have any neglect to reproach myself with: this letter will no doubt imbitter my distress, but I will see its contents.”

Maria who could well judge of its tenor from the conversation of the writer, unwillingly delivered it into her Lady’s hand,
and

and then stood in silence to watch the effect she dreaded it might have upon her spirits and returning health : nor were her apprehensions unfounded, for Rosaura sunk fainting on her pillow, ere her dim eye had wholly scanned the diabolic scrawl.

Maria screamed loudly for her mother, who was in another division of the hut, and who instantly obeyed the call : but a considerable time elapsed before their efforts in any degree succeeded in restoring her to animation.

Whilst they were yet busily employed with the invalid, some one entered the cabin, and hallooed to every one of the family alternately : but as the intruder received no reply, he opened the little rush door that secluded Rosaura from the outward room ; and Maria casting towards him a hasty glance, exclaimed—“ Oh Giovanni, the wicked cruelty of that Countess Almerini has killed our dear Lady !”

“ No,

“No, I hope not,” returned he, gazing anxiously upon the colourless and emaciated face of Rosaura: “but yet—I fear me it is so! Try to get some wine down her throat.”

Maria hung her head, and wept.

“Alas, my friend,” said her mother, “we have no wine, nor have we any money to procure it; we gave the last carlin we had for medicines and nourishment, which she could not do without: but we should not have been so ill off, only the doctor would be paid partly now, or else he would not have come again, and she is yet too bad, as you see, to do without him. Dear lady, we will beg and borrow for her while we can!”

“Take this,” said Giovanni, hastily drawing from his pocket a crown and some small money, “and before it is gone, I will bring you more, if I rob a Cardinal to get it!”

“Oh Giovanni, you make me shudder!” exclaimed Maria; “do not bring yourself

yourself to trouble. God will provide for our beloved Lady without any such thing as robbing."

"Yes, I trust he will," replied Giovanni; "I talked foolishly—see, our good Lady seems coming to life a little. Don't say I have been here, or may be she will ask what I came for, and find out——"

At this moment Rosaura gave increasing signs of animation; and Giovanni hastily retreating, quitted the cabin, and walked for some time to and fro before it, in deep thought: at length he darted away full speed, and in half an hour brought a flask of wine to the hut, which he put into the hand of Maria, and suddenly retreated again, after having heard that Rosaura was rather better.

This account of her was true, for she was indeed comparatively better, but still so feeble, so soul-less, so heart-stricken, that Maria and her mother remained with her through the night, and their united
cares

cares could scarcely prevent her from sinking under her calamities.

In the morning she slept uninterruptedly for two hours, and appeared refreshed by this salutary repose to her mind, as well as her body : but on awaking, after remaining for a few moments in an earnest reverie, she requested Maria to inform her, if she were able, what terrible and crushing surcharge of misery had occasioned her strength and her spirits so entirely to fail on the preceding day.

“ Some confused idea clings to me,” added Rosaura feebly, “ of being pursued by Countess Almerini in vengeful anger.”

“ A hard-hearted wretch !” exclaimed Maria : “ don’t think of her, my dear Lady, but think of getting well again ; and then see if good luck don’t overtake us after all !”

Rosaura sighed, and tears filled her eyes.

“ I am cast,” said she, “ so far from the track of good fortune, that I fear my utmost struggles

struggles will never empower me to reach it again ! But now, I wish to know—I will be resigned—tell me then, my good, my faithful Maria, how have you contrived that I should hitherto exist?—My recollection can now enable me to ascertain that our subsistence could not be drawn from my almost exhausted resources, and I have been, I fear, an insupportable burthen upon your generous but indigent parents !”

“ Oh no, my dear Lady, no ! but you must not talk so much, you are faint already.”

Rosaura felt indeed that she must for some time restrain her anxious curiosity, since her weakness furnished those about her with a just pretext to refuse any discussion on those points they wished to avoid : yet when Maria presented to her some wine as a cordial, and she had discovered that it was of a very superior quality, she could not refrain from enquiring from whence it came.

Awkwardly

Awkwardly enough, but successfully, since Rosaura had not strength to urge her demand, Maria evaded it: and her Lady then became silent from necessity, and lay ruminating for some time upon the destiny of her cousin Viralva, and the too probable danger there was that Ruvello had vainly sent his emissary in search of her ere that time.

“The explanation I must give, the disappointment I must inflict, will be keen indeed to my expecting husband!” thought she: “yet it is better that he should consider me as the most unfortunate, rather than the most selfish and perfidious of women!”

“All hope is then lost,” resumed she after a pause: “let me calmly ascertain the whole of this final calamity. Oh you who can so coolly and amply detail it to the wretch it overwhelms, let me convert your cruelty to a useful purpose, and reflect that to me poverty should be stripped of half its horrors, since I have
nothing

nothing further to fear or to dread !—Oh yes, yes—I *have* to dread, to feel the sting of calumny and the shaft of malice. These are ills that poverty has entailed upon me, and exceed—Oh, Heaven ! how far do they not exceed the lighter evils of penury and want !”

With such reflections as the companions of destitute sickness, it is not wonderful that Rosaura should not easily regain either strength or sanity of body ; yet even in this desolate situation, she sought for comfort and consolation, and found them in the consciousness of her own rectitude—in the solacing idea of having endeavoured to act with integrity and virtue, and in the humble hope that she was at peace with Heaven, which condemns guilt, but not error.

Every evening Giovanni brought to the hut a small supply of money, which would not, however, have sufficed for the support of the invalid, had not the mother of Maria daily applied at the gate

of a rich Convent for bread and soup, which the Sisterhood charitably distributed to those who asked it. From thence likewise a mattress and a coverlet had been procured, without which this poor family could not, in any manner, however wretched, have accommodated their hapless guest.

Towards the close of the fifth day, after she had regained her senses, Maria assisted her Lady to rise from her humble couch. Rosaura had already, by the earnestness of her importunity, been informed of the means by which she had lately been sustained, and she protracted her return to her bed, that she might give herself a chance of first seeing and thanking Giovanni for the succour he so generously afforded her. How it was procured by him, she was equally anxious with Maria to learn; for the poor girl mentioned, with tears in her eyes, that he had been dismissed the service he had obtained for having affronted some ladies

ladies at a conversationis where he was attending with coffee, because they spoke ill of Signora Ruvello, and asserted that her misconduct was the origin of the adventure that had deprived her unfortunate husband of all that could render life desirable.

Almost an hour had elapsed since Rosaura had risen; and though Giovanni generally at this time called for a moment, to give his little offering to the care of some one of the family, yet now he appeared not, and she could no longer endure the faint lassitude that increased upon her.

“I am unable, I find, to await him any further,” said she, her accents sinking to a feeble whisper: “assist me, my kind Maria——”

At this moment the door gently opened, and the voice of Count Orvino—a voice that vibrated to the palpitating heart of Rosaura, entreated admittance.

A loud shriek from Maria was the only

reply he obtained; and instantly darting forward, he beheld in her arms a ghastly and inanimate figure, that, but for the harmonious symmetry of the features, which neither disease nor insensibility could rob of their sweetness, he could never have recognised for the beautiful Signora Ruvello, thus reduced to seek a refuge in the most miserable of huts, that Signora Ruvello to whom all Naples had paid homage a few short months since.

Almost as pale and motionless as herself, Orvino remained for a few seconds: then suddenly recovering his recollection, he relieved Maria from her beloved burthen, that she might procure assistance and the necessary restoratives: but her mother was gone to the Convent for the alms she solicited, and the rest of the family had not yet returned from their daily occupations—two children who were not able to work, having been actually sent by Maria, to beg for her who was once their benefactress.

-All

All that the poor girl could do therefore was to present a little water, and some pungent essence with which Rosaura had formerly provided herself.

Orvino appeared almost distracted.—“Oh Ruvello!” he exclaimed, “mad-man! fool! insensate!—this is your work! Wretch that you are, can I behold this scene, and compassionate you still!——“Can you not call some one,” added he, after a momentary pause, “can you not procure any aid?”

“My mother will soon be back,” returned the distressed, yet rejoiced Maria; “but I cannot think what keeps Giovanni so long!”

“I believe she revives!” exclaimed Orvino—“thank Heaven! I will withdraw for the present. Tell your dear and injured Lady that a friend—a warm and zealous friend, has flown to her succour: tell her—that she will soon behold the good Anselmo!”

Orvino then retreated to the other compartment of the cabin, and at the same moment Maria's mother entered it with a jug of soup and a small loaf of bread.

“Are you an inhabitant of this hut?” demanded he impatiently. “Why do you quit it for so long a time, careless of the precious charge Fate has entrusted to you! Signora Ruvello, the lady, is very ill!”

“I careless of her!” exclaimed the good woman, as she deposited her provision in a place of safety: “if an angel had dropped from heaven into this poor hovel, I could not have done any other than I have done to make her welcome and comfortable, as far as my poor means will go. We have tended her night and day—poor lady, she wanted it bad enough! but she wants likewise a mouthful of victuals as much as any thing now she is getting better, and I must get it for her how I can. I have hungry children
too,

too, Signor Cavalier ; but she shall have it first ! I was made to wait at the Convent gate till the lay-sister was at leisure, and when I asked her for the love of Jesus, to serve me without more ado, she told me beggars should not be impatient. I said I would not, if I had begged for myself, but that I begged for one who had never let a poor wretch languish at her door, and who in giving alms for the love of God, had always given a tear for the love of humanity.”

“ Go to her, my good woman,” said Orvino, turning away—“ go to her ! For the moment do all you can—but she must be removed immediately.”

When she left him, he remained for a short time in anxious expectation that either herself or her daughter would bring him intelligence of the entire revival of their lovely guest ; and at length Maria with an aspect of hope and joy, hastened to him.

When she had replied to his enquiries

in a manner tolerably satisfactory, she would no longer be restrained from recounting all that her beloved Lady had endured from the time he left Naples.

“And because,” added Maria, “she had not trouble enough with all her misfortunes, that wicked Countess Almerini wrote her such a letter, that it almost killed her, just as she was recovering from the fever !”

“What were the contents of that letter—have you any idea of what it contained ?” demanded he eagerly.

“I took it away, that my Lady might not read it again,” replied Maria ; “but I would not look at it, because I would not pry into my dear Lady’s concerns ; but I know it is full of wicked spite and ill-nature, and bad news besides. There can be no harm for you to read it though, because you wish her well, and are her friend. Shall I get it, Signor Conte ?”

After a pause, Orvino assented, and Maria immediately applied to an old trunk
in

in which she had deposited the malignant scroll, and presented it to him. These were its contents.

“ The few friends your wild eccentric conduct and degraded sentiments had not robbed you of, of which number I confess myself weakly to have been one, are all revolted at the atrocity of the plan you so artfully, but ineffectually represent to me, as an adventure in which yourself and the associate you call the Marquis di Viralva, are such innocent and ill-treated subjects. Believe me, Signora Ruvello, since, unhappily for myself and my family, you are entitled to that appellation—believe me the credulity of the world has its limits, nor can the address of the most adroit of our sex, even aided by that beauty that imposes upon the other, overcome the conviction that a succession of glaring and obstinate facts will ever create!

You cannot therefore be surprised that the pension which had actually been granted to you, as a person bearing our name, should be revoked; and that your paramour should be immediately sent to the galleys by the Government he has outraged, even if the Duke di Brandosi pardons or overlooks his crime.

“As for yourself, you will not long be suffered to remain in the pure and refined asylum you have heroically selected; but assure yourself that, when our injured family can assemble to deliberate upon your fate, you will be compelled to expiate your shameful irregularities in the austerity of a penitentiary Convent; where you may fill up the leisure, which devotion and discipline will leave you, in meditating on the fallacy of your projects and the disappointment of your hopes; for you may be assured that neither Orvino, your first favourite, nor your feigned cousin, who has, I find, succeeded him in your affection, shall be admitted to soften the
3 rigour

rigour of your fate, by the offer of that homage you have preferred to your duty and your reputation.

“Apply no more to me—I abandon you to the destiny you so well merit; and should your female companion again presume to enter my gates, she shall be severely chastised for her temerity.

“THE COUNTESS ALMERINI.”

“Abhorred fiend!” exclaimed Orvino, “viper—serpent!—not contented to sting this fair and gentle victim to death, but you would also wind round her dying form, that her last breath may be drawn in painful and loathsome bondage!—Maria,” added he, “has your Lady lately enquired for this vile transcript of a viler mind?”

“The nasty letter do you mean, Signor Conte? No—for I told her that I was afraid it was lost, and she said it was no matter,

H.6

matter, for she could not forget it. But though I did not like she should have it to read again, I thought I would not burn it or tear it, so I put it away."

Orvino commended her discretion, and after some internal deliberation, he desired that she would suffer him to take possession of the paper, lest any one should accidentally read it—for that it was not proper for every eye, and it might likewise be employed in future, for the benefit of her beloved Lady : but he particularly cautioned her at the same time, not to allow the least indication to escape her, that he had ever seen or heard of it.

Maria replied that she knew he was such a good gentleman, and wished her dear Lady so well, that she would let him have it ; and because she knew besides, that he would not ask her to do any thing wrong.

At this moment Giovanni entered, followed by several men, laden as he was likewise himself, with a number of conveniences

niences and comforts, such as the cabin of a Lazzarone had never before contained: they brought likewise wine, fruit, chocolate, and iced water, and a variety of delicacies adapted to the sickly appetite of an invalid. Having disburthened himself of some of these, Giovanni delivered the following billet to Count Orvino.

“ If Signora Ruvello be only half as ill as her servant represents her, my worthy young friend, it would be wrong to expose her to the hazard and fatigue of a removal, until she have regained some degree of strength to enable her to bear the heat and motion which in a carriage she cannot be exempted from. I send therefore by Giovanni, your messenger, a few necessaries to render her present unworthy abode less horrible and noxious, and I desire to assure you that

I would

I would have obeyed your summons with eager alacrity, had not my word been engaged to pass this evening with an unfortunate, to whom my presence is useful and consoling."

"To-morrow my own inclination will lead me early to the hut that contains Signora Ruvello, whose merit and whose sufferings have inspired me with the tender affection of a parent. As my daughter I aspire to consider her; and if my attachment to her, and her misfortunes, can induce her to forget the dissimilarity of our rank in this strange world, I shall be allowed, I trust, the happiness of endeavouring to erase from her recollection, the injustice of the fate that has hitherto pursued her.

"ANSELMO."

"Generous Anselmo!" sighed Orvino, "and happy as generous; since no cruel barrier opposes your avowal of an admiration

ration and tender affection, I am doomed to experience each day with increasing ardour, and repel each day with increasing effort !”

“ Ah Illustrissimo,” exclaimed Maria, as she hastily entered from the apartment of the invalid, “ my Lady is obstinate, and will not consent to accept of these comfortable things : she says she is very well off already, and does not want them ; and yet I know she has often groaned with weariness from the hardness of her mattress—for you know she has not been used to such a poor bed !”

Orvino was shocked at this representation.

“ These trifles,” said he, “ are a small offering from the paternal friendship of the good Anselmo, and your dear but mistaken Lady must not reject any thing that is derived from a source so sacred as parental love. Tell her this, Maria, and that Signor Anselmo will enforce it himself to-morrow morning, if she will condescend to give him admission.”

“ I can-

“ I cannot contend,” said Rosaura, when this was reported to her, tears coursing each other over her pale cheeks : “ this kind solicitude to which of late I have been so little used, except from my faithful Maria and her family, overwhelms my weakened spirits, and like a wayward infant, I weep I know not why !”

Satisfied with having for the present silenced her scruples, Orvino left the cabin ; and Rosaura, after having wetted her pillow with her tears, was solaced with a peaceful slumber.

CHAP. VII.

COUNT Orvino had entered Naples the day before, and had instantly hastened to the house of the Merchant Anselmo : not in the idea of finding Rosaura there, for he had already learned that she had quitted it, but in the full persuasion that he should from thence be directed to her residence.

In answer to his earnest enquiries, Madam Beatrice informed him that the Signora Ruvello had so much scandalized her by her irregular conduct, that she did not chuse to remain under the same roof with her ; for that she had been
almost

almost harrassed into her grave by the wild vagaries of the gallants who came after her.

This intelligence very much astonished the Count ; but he was soon relieved from his involuntary inquietude, by the folly and volubility of Dame Beatrice, which defeated and contradicted her own assertions ; and he learned from her prattle the exact state of the case, and likewise the share her Confessor had in compelling the fair fugitive to quit the asylum the Count had so earnestly sought to place her in.

With some difficulty he then traced the steps of Rosaura to the roof of the treacherous wretch who had betrayed her to the Duke di Brandosi ; but from this place his researches and reiterated enquiries were equally vain.

Virginia Alviano, to whom he applied, wept whilst she professed her entire ignorance of the actual situation of her beloved cousin : but from her he heard a detail of the affair between the Duke and Viralva,
in

in whose behalf her recital and artless commendation much interested Orvino.

Signora Alviano pronounced herself both shocked and offended at the mere mention of her hapless niece in her virtuous presence; whilst Countess Almerini on her part, poured forth a history which depicted Rosaura as the most insolent, the most capricious, the most vindictive, absurd, and intriguing of women.

Orvino heard her through with the utmost difficulty; repeating, however, at every pause of the narrative—"But where—where is she now—where at this moment is she sheltered?"

To which the Countess waved a direct reply, until she had closed her malignant account of the sufferer; and then Orvino discovered with a consequent rage and indignation that almost suffocated him, that Rosaura had sent to this woman from the cabin of a Lazzarone, in the superb near Pausilippo, where she was extended upon the bed of sickness, destitute and helpless,

helpless, and that she had been repulsed with harshness.

“Wretch—monster!” exclaimed he, starting from his seat—“I supplicate of Heaven that I may never see you more, lest, forgetting your sex, I might testify my abhorrence by sacrificing you to my indignation!”

He then rushed out of the house, and flew to the huts and caverns of the Lazaroni in the mountain of Pausilippo: but the idea entertained by the family of Maria, that her Lady was sought for as an accomplice of her cousin, the Marquis of Viralva, prevented any acknowledgement of her being amongst them; and though her abode was known by a considerable number of these poor people, yet the secret was not betrayed.

Orvino returned homeward disappointed and dejected, and the next day renewed his pursuit on foot, with an intention of entering every mansion of poverty he might encounter: and this intention he actually accomplished, but with as little success

success as he had experienced amidst the habitations of the Lazzaroni.

In the evening as he was pensively crossing an open space near the palace, his progress was rather impeded by a crowd assembled round a fellow with a mask on his face, and a guitar in his hands, to the accompaniment of which he was singing. Orvino impatiently made his way through the audience, and would soon have left both them and the musician far behind him, had not the masked gentleman at this crisis laid aside his instrument, to rehearse a comic story which he announced with infinite humour.

His voice as he spoke, appeared familiar to the ear of the Count, whose attention was irresistibly engaged by accents and tones he was sensible he had lately heard, though he could not recollect where he had listened to them, or to whom they belonged. Actuated by an impulse he could not resist, Orvino now loitered amidst the throng.

The

The orator had chosen his station very advantageously ; for he faced the beautiful bay of Naples. The old women who were eagerly listening to him, sat spinning coarse flax, and the children lay at their ease before them, twirling the spindle. Men and their wives, youths and their mistresses, sat in a circle with their eyes fixed on the speaker, who contrived to excite their laughter almost incessantly by the drollery of his tale, which he interspersed with tunes on his guitar.

Orvino was becoming, however, very impatient for the conclusion of it, that he might question the masked orator, when the fellow suddenly discarding his comic tone, thus addressed the assembly—

“ Ladies and gentlemen, there is a time for all things—we have had enough of the burlesque for the present : innocent mirth is good for the health of the body, but we must likewise attend to the health of our souls.

“ I am very lately returned from the
holy

holy house of Loretto, my fellow Christians," added he, producing a bag full of small leaden crucifixes which he displayed to the crowd: "whither I went on purpose to procure for you these jewels, more precious than gold or diamonds, for each of which however, I only require one penny, inestimable though they are——"

At this moment the eye of the speaker caught the figure of Orvino, and hastily casting from him the jewels which he had just described as so inestimably precious, he darted through the throng, some of whom he overturned in his progress, and falling at the feet of the Count, clasped his knees in a transport of joy.

"Oh Illustrissimo!" exclaimed he, "you are sent by Heaven to save the life of my beloved Lady!"

"Who art thou—what Lady?" demanded Orvino in a quick accent.

"I am Giovanni," replied he, "who attended Signora Ruvello, till hard necessity made her discard her faithful servant."

"Let

“ Let us withdraw,” said Orvino ;
“ come this way—follow me !”

Giovanno gladly obeyed, leaving his audience scrambling for the leaden crucifixes. When he had unmasked, and described to the Count the miserable situation of Rosaura, Orvino dispatched him with a pencilled billet to the house of Signor Anselmo, who had been expected home the night before in consequence of an intimation he had forwarded by a servant, to apprize his household ; and the Count flew himself, in meantime, to the place where he discovered her he sought.

On the following morning Rosaura found her weakness, so much decreased, that she arose to receive the promised visit of the good Anselmo, to whom Antonino was privately dispatched by the previous instruction of Orvino, when she was ready to see him, and the old man hastened to the cabin.

But when he beheld the wretchedness with which she was still surrounded, and
that

that emaciated and apparently exhausted figure which he had at their first meeting contemplated in all the lustre of youthful beauty, spite of the grief that even then overwhelmed her, his feelings overcame his general serenity, a deep sigh burst from his bosom, and tears wetted his benignant aspect.

Rosaura, inexpressibly moved at his emotion, wept likewise.

“Oh, my friend, my father!” exclaimed she, “the world has indeed used me cruelly, but in your tender compassion I find a healing balm for the wounds it has inflicted, as in your bounty I have already found——”

“The appellations of friend and father,” interrupted Anselmo, “confer upon me a happiness equal to the honour I derive from a condescension so unmerited. Can I then endure to hear in the same sentence, a word that a daughter should never use?——The possessions of a good father are the property of his children,

and I have no other child than yourself ! I will now tax your duty, by requesting you to forgive the mistaken woman who drove you from a parent's roof, into the stormy scenes you have from that time encountered. Beatrice is fully sensible of her error, and has exchanged her officious Confessor, at my entreaty, for one who will be content to direct her in her spiritual concerns only. Forgive, amiable Signora Ruvello, the imbecility you have magnanimity enough to compassionate, and believe that the heart of my unlucky sister had very little share in inflicting the injury she now deploras."

"Most sincerely and wholly I pardon her error," replied Rosaura ; "I had indeed already done so, because I easily perceived that she was guided by a judgment she revered and preferred to her own."

"I am now satisfied," returned Anselmo ; "since you will not refuse to attest your forgiveness by returning to
the

the situation whence you were so barbarously driven. And, my daughter," he added, giving to her a sealed packet, "this is the sum extorted from you under my roof by my simple sister, with a trifling addition to it, as a token of a father's love."

"Oh no," exclaimed Rosaura, "I cannot, I must not! Indeed, Signor Anselmo, this beneficence is too extensive—I am too much oppressed——"

Anselmo, now assuming the authority of the title he claimed, overcame the reluctance she could not suppress, and then informed her, that as she appeared capable of the effort, Signora Beatrice would attend her after she had reposed herself in the afternoon, to accompany her to his abode.

Rosaura would fain have excused herself for the present.—"I am yet unable to decide," said she, "how far it is strictly proper that I should receive the benefits you would crowd upon me. Oh Signor

Anseldo! worthy, generous, candid as you are, you know not the insidious malignancy with which some part of the family of my husband have marked my hapless career of misery and misfortune!"

"I know it all," replied he; "and by one sentence only I could extend Countess Almerini at your feet: but she shall be yet more effectually humbled; for I know likewise that you would forget the injuries she has done you, and spare her the reproaches she so well merits. You are, I see, fatigued and languid," added Anseldo, hastily rising: "I will retire. You will not hesitate, my respected daughter, to quit this miserable hovel for a habitation less unworthy and inconvenient. Force me not to add the entreaties of a humble friend to the injunctions of a parent—cast me not back to the distance which the usages of the world have placed between us, but let me have evidence of your esteem and regard which I cannot doubt."

- Rosaura

Rosaura, scarcely able to articulate, signified her assent; and Signor Anselmo then retired, after having called Maria to attend her Lady, who immediately sought the repose so necessary to her.

Having slept for some time, she arose much refreshed and invigorated; and her first care, now the power was given her, was to reward in some degree the solicitude, the kindness, and generous hospitality of the poor family who had sheltered her, attended her, laboured, and begged for her. She found, on examining the liberal gift of Anselmo, that she might even, with justice to herself and to her husband, to whom she instantly appropriated half of the sum, contrive to place them in some little shop, provided the stock were not expensive, and apprentice Antonino to some useful trade: but when she mentioned her intention to the father and mother of Maria, in order to consult them upon the execution of it, they informed her that the worthy Signor Anselmo had

promised to take care of them all, except Antonino; and he was to go immediately into the household of Count Orvino, who said the boy should not be a servant, but that he should be taught all he was capable of learning, that he might advance his future fortune.

“But all this good luck,” said Maria eagerly, “is owing to you, Illustrissima, just the same as if you did it!”

“We all know that,” rejoined her father; “we are not fools, Maria.”

“No, indeed!” exclaimed the mother; “we have sense enough to find out from what quarter our good fortune comes, and in our prayers we shall always begin with our good Signora Ruvello, let who will come after!”

It was with some difficulty Rosaura silenced the acknowledgements they were eager to offer her; and as she now secretly proposed to divide her intended bounty between Maria and Giovanni, she enquired for him, and learned that he was
at

at the house of Signor Anselmo, who had retained him to attend her again.

Rosaura shook her head.

“ This must not be ! ” sighed she—
“ this too generous man must be reminded that whilst I have an exiled and necessitous husband, I cannot live in luxurious ease, without exciting the reproaches I should then so well deserve ! ”

When the sun had sunk beneath the horizon, and the atmosphere was less oppressive, Signora Beatrice, attended by Giovanni, reached the cabin in a carriage well supplied with cushions, to support the invalid in her removal, and to render it less fatiguing to her.

Madame Beatrice having been conducted to Rosaura, was shocked at her altered countenance and figure, which her conscience whispered to her, might perhaps have been in a great degree occasioned by the consequences of her conduct ; so that she approached her lately expelled guest with a supplicating mien, professed her

sincere penitence for what she had done, and begged that she might hear the Signora Ruvello pronounce her pardon.

Rosaura extending to her her emaciated hand, assured her that her present kindness far outbalanced her former misapprehension ; and thus was the peace ratified. She was then supported to the carriage ; but notwithstanding every precaution that could be used, she was so much exhausted by her short traverse, that on arriving at the hospitable mansion of Anselmo, she was immediately placed in her bed.

Several days elapsed before she could gain strength enough to admit a visit from Orvino, who petitioned for an audience as soon as possible, that he might not only account to her for having returned to Naples without having succeeded in meeting with Ruvello, but that he might obtain from her an indication of his present residence and his present plans.

“ His

“His present plans!” repeated she;
“Alas! can I now even divine what they
may be?”

She could not refuse his request, and
Orvino was at length introduced to her.

He immediately expressed his satisfac-
tion at the improvement of her health,
which her appearance, he said, so well
announced.

“It is to you I am indebted,” said
Rosaura—“to you that the generous
Signor Anselmo——”

“Speak not in this strain, I conjure
you,” interrupted he; “it is solely to
your own merit, your sufferings, and your
virtues, that you are indebted for the
esteem, the consideration, and the paternal
affection of the good Anselmo. For
myself, Signora Ruvello, I could only
presume to offer you the distant services—
which—my respect, my veneration——
but enough of this—allow me to mention
that I have seen the injured Marquis di
Viralva, who is extremely solicitous to

learn that you are calm and at ease respecting his detention, which I hope will terminate to the confusion of the infamous Brandosi. The stiletto he assured me, on the word of a man of honour, and I have not for a moment doubted it, was wrested by him from the Duke, who carried it in his bosom in a sheath. This circumstance must be known to the domestics immediately about his person; and the stiletto itself, which is richly adorned, and of a peculiar form, must be recognised. Viralva is a man of rank, and of unquestioned valour. He will obtain many friends: he has indeed already many partisans, and sentiments are whispered abroad which exonerate him and criminate his accuser."

"Amidst the persecutions of fortune, which my cousin has sustained," returned Rosaura, "he is still happy in obtaining Count Orvino for a friend: and should he extricate himself with an unblemished honour from this affair, he will think himself well repaid by such an event, for
the

the temporary disgrace and inconvenience he may endure. You said," added Rosaura, hastily turning to the subject, "that you wished to learn where my unfortunate husband now resides. When I heard from him last, he was on the frontier town of the Papal territory, in the route from Naples to Rome, awaiting—alas! he was awaiting that insidious gleam of good fortune we were not doomed to enjoy, which would have consoled us for the evils we have suffered. Barbarous, indeed, has been the conduct of the Duke di Brandosi, since it has deprived Signor Ruvello and myself of the bounty of our Sovereign!"

"I am well informed," returned Orvino, "that this deprivation arose principally from the machinations of Signora Alviano and the Marquis D'Asavoli."

"The Marquis D'Asavoli!" repeated she: "impossible! On the contrary, he employed his interest and his time——"

"To counteract the efforts of your
1 6 friends,"

friends," interrupted Orvino. "Who could inspire you with any other opinion of his conduct?"

"The Procuratore Buonatesta assured me," replied Rosaura, "that to the exertions of the Marquis——"

"Then the Procuratore must be a villain," retorted Orvino warmly, "for he could not but know the reverse!"

"To yourself then," said Rosaura, "to your friendship, I now perceive Ruvello was indebted for an effort that was not the less generous because it was unavowed."

"Pardon me, not to me wholly—not to me in any material degree," replied the Count, "but to my friend Anselmo should your suspicion point: his influence is secondary, but it is not inconsiderable. Permit me to enquire if you often admitted the visits of the Procuratore you mention?"

Rosaura who now perceived that she must have been cruelly duped by this
man,

man, would have evaded this enquiry; but Orvino pressed it so earnestly, that she could not refuse to reply not only to this demand, but to those that succeeded; and he then discovered that the intimation given to him by Maria was just, for that the wretch had pillaged her without mercy.

“ Oh Signora Ruvello,” exclaimed he, “ candid, generous, unsuspecting as you are, what guard could you keep against treachery such as this—and what must that man have felt who, compelled to forego his earnest wish of guiding, protecting, shielding you from every ill——”

He paused, then resumed in a less animated tone—“ if Ruvello had been as culpable as the Venari family assert him to be, he expiates it by this punishment alone! He is gone—did you say—to Rome?”

The confusion of mind visible in Orvino, had communicated itself to Rosaura, and in faltering accents, her eyes averted, she repeated the information she had already given

given. Soon however regaining her composure, she subjoined an apology for the conduct of her husband, which must have arisen, she said from the disturbance of his mind, unsettled and even distracted as it might be well supposed, by such sudden, such almost instantaneous reverses as he had experienced.

Orvino was silent, and appeared abstracted.

“ You are perhaps offended, Count,” continued she, “ that he should have so ill repaid your generous cares and exertions, as to have neglected or forgotten that you had appointed to meet him at Rome, whither you were called for his benefit alone: but reflect, that he found himself for the first moment of his life without friends, without associates of any kind, without even a country—when his evil destiny cast him in the path of those wretches, who were insidiously emulative to supply to him, till the hour of their triumph, all that he had lost——”

“ *All that he had lost!*” suddenly exclaimed

exclaimed Orvino : “ from what Heaven did they then trepan an angel in mind, in temper, in grace, in dignity, in beauty, to supply to him——”

“ *Illustrissima*, here is a letter !” exclaimed Maria, as she darted into the room, “ a letter from the *Padrone* I believe, which Countess Almerini sent to our cabin ; and my father brought it here !”

“ From my husband !” said Rosaura. “ Give it me !”

During the interchange of these sentences, Orvino silently withdrew ; and though his retreat was not unmarked by Rosaura, she did not endeavour to prevent it.

“ What is the matter with our good Count ?” demanded Maria, as she delivered the paper, “ I never saw him look so before. I do think he bit his lips through and through !”

“ Retire,” said her Lady mildly : “ I will ring for you in a few minutes.”

The girl obeyed, and Rosaura hastily opened her letter, which she found prefaced by these unexpected words—

“ *Abandoned woman !*

“ Exiled, outcast as I am,” proceeded Ruvello, “ your infamy has reached me ! Accursed be the moment when, ensnared by your fatal beauty, and specious character of candour and virtue, I gave you my name, and signed my ruin ! Your uncle has abandoned you, you say ! I follow his example, but with this difference, that I shall find means, for the honour of my family, to confine your theatre of action in future, to the walls of a Convent !

“ I can too well divine in what manner your jewels, and every other valuable, were disposed of. I know, that for the sake of him you dignify with the name of Viralva, you cast away the pension already bestowed upon you, and gave up husband, protectors,

tectors, fame, and friends! This I will incessantly reflect upon, that no absurd compassion may intervene between the vengeance I meditate, and its object.

“ This day I quit my present residence to follow my desperate fortune. Make no researches for me—my future destiny shall be known only by those of my family, who will prosecute my just revenge upon the most ungrateful of women towards the outraged

“ RUVELLO.”

“ It is well !” said Rosaura, after a long pause. Yes, Ruvello, I will retire to a Convent. Give me only the privilege of chusing my prison, and I will shut myself from a world, of which I am weary : yet must I, if possible, conceal his injustice, that this unfortunate, who can so ill provide against the contingencies to which he is liable, may not perish for want of that aid which his sordid and unfeeling family will not I am convinced bestow.

bestow. In the interim what shall I answer to the enquiries of the Count?—the Count!—yes, yes, a Convent is my only asylum! I will fly to one, lest his honour sink in the conflict, or my treacherous heart betray me!”

When Maria returned to her, Rosaura was informed that Signor Anselmo wished to exchange a sentence with her, if she were not too much fatigued to admit him; and she desired that he might be instantly introduced.

Anselmo regarded her earnestly when he was seated, and deprecated her too stedfast attention to any point, that by interesting her feelings, might agitate a frame yet too weak to endure any lively emotion, either of joy or sorrow.

“I will be concise in the enquiry I wish to make,” added he, “and you must be equally so in your replies. Tell me, my amiable, my much-revered daughter, whither I may dispatch a courier to Signor Ravello? His letter
was

was fortunately timed ; for the messenger I intended to send, was actually departing when it arrived—and perhaps he may have changed his residence since you last heard from him ?”

Rosaura sighed, and hesitated—and Anselmo observing her evident distress, enquired if her husband were in health.

“ I hope so,” replied Rosaura, resting her forehead upon her hand, unconscious that she did so.

“ Is my intrusion very ill-timed ?” asked the good old man : “ I fear you think so. I should not indeed just now have pressed for the intelligence I seek, but that I wish, as soon as possible, to transmit some letters of recommendation to Signor Ruvello, of the utmost importance to him, and which should not be retarded in the delivery. My importunity is troublesome—I perceive that it is. I will retire now, and when you are more disposed—yet no ! I will further explain myself. The man who brought this letter
to

to Naples, which he left in the care of Countess Almerini, to whom he was charged, it seems, with another—that man is arrested by our Government, and he has called Signor Ruvello his friend: it is important, therefore——”

“ I know not,” interrupted Rosaura, “ where my unhappy husband now is ! Some wretch has poisoned his ear with tales—Alas, my father ! he may now be wandering without even the means of existence—he may be encompassed with dangers he cannot perceive——”

“ Confide in me wholly,” said Anselmo: “ shew me the letter you have but now received, that if a judgement may be formed—if a surmise can be made—in short, if we can only gain a clue——”

“ He has not left us any,” interrupted she: “ I will impart to you in confidence the contents of that letter; but do not, my father, betray the trust to any one—and think not hardly of the hapless writer, but reflect that he was goaded by the
malice

malice that represented as vile and despicable, a creature he had raised from poverty to share his affluence, whom he had cherished and entrusted with his name, and that he believed himself dishonoured and betrayed !”

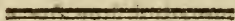
Anselmo regarded her for a moment in silent admiration, shook his head, and hurried through the contents of the offered paper, upon which he made not the smallest comment.

“ I will still send to the place he says he has quitted, in search of this mistaken man,” said he : “ perchance some accident may have detained him ; or if he be gone, his route may be traced—my agent is both diligent and wary.”

“ May Heaven reward your generous cares !” exclaimed Rosaura : “ Oh Signor Anselmo, hasten, lest some other should precede you, and frustrate your benevolence !”

“ The courier is now waiting,”
returned

returned he, “equipped for his expedition, and every instruction already given. I will dispatch him instantly.”



CHAP. VIII.

IN half an hour Anselmo returned to her, to mention that his messenger was then on his way to the frontiers ; and Rosaura having endeavoured to express some part of the gratitude her heart experienced, proceeded to say that she had formed a resolution resulting from the letter she had recently received, which she believed and hoped her friends would approve.

“ I know not,” continued she, “ in what

what I have so much excited the displeasure of those circles to which it was my fate to be introduced at Naples ; but, unhappily for me, the world appears eager to credit those cruel tales, which some malignant being publishes to disgrace and dishonour me ! Ruvello speaks of a Convent ; and thither also propriety as well as duty, my inclination and my earnest wishes point : but no community will receive me without the means of repaying it for the asylum I demand—— Let me proceed ! Yes, friend, father of the desolate Rosaura, it is to you she turns her languid eyes for the succour she needs !”

“ And I reproach myself,” returned he, “ that I have not sooner informed you that in this paper you will find a pension secured to you of two thousand crowns. And now, my amiable and beloved daughter, suffer me to offer you the advice of an old man, to whom the vices and the follies of that world that slanders virtue

virtue and caresses successful villany, are not unknown. In a few days Signor Ruvello will be effectually undeceived; and if my hopes do not mislead me, he will avow his error, and solicit your forgiveness for the injustice he abjures: far from again adverting to your retirement from the world, he will, I am persuaded, sanction the opinion I now offer, that you should again appear in it, supported as I can aver you will find yourself, by the Signor Andrea di Ruvello, who will shortly return hither from Spain, and even by Countess Almerini herself, who will ere long convince you that I prophesy not falsely. The tide of popular opinion soon turns; wait awhile, and experience this truth—wait until the brave Marquis di Viralva regain his liberty and his privileges in society, and until the falsehood and slander of the Duke di Brandosi shall be amply refuted. Then indeed, should your present wish for seclusion remain, you may retire with applause and honour
from

from the society that courts you, and show mankind that it is the adopted alternative of virtue, not the enforced punishment of guilt."

"What you urge is I believe just," returned Rosaura: "yet ere I reply to your argument, suffer me, best of men, to restrain your benevolence to juster and better limits. Half of the noble stipend you have mentioned, will be to me an ample provision; for I am no longer the Signora Ruvello who could live only in a palace, and to whose artificial wants the commerce of the globe was to be subservient, but the Rosaura to whom a hut was a welcome refuge, and the alms bestowed by piety, a sustenance."

"Take back this paper, and abridge your bounty, that I may receive it without pain or reluctance. And now my father, hear me upon the other subject. To return to the society that has spurned me, would be to me a sacrifice so great, that I know not of any claim that can now be

made upon me, of sufficient force to induce me to yield to it. What is the world to me, and what are the allurements it presents? It has none—my heart pants to be for ever delivered from its turbulence and treachery !”

Anselmo persuaded her however, that the sacrifice was due to her character, to justice, to the dignity of innocence, and even to Ruvello ; and ever diffident of her own judgement, Rosaura would have ceded to the maturer one of a friend so disinterested, had not a repugnance, a fear, a dread, which was the delicate offspring of Virtue, rendered her impenetrable to his argument, by representing him likewise as the friend of Orvino. Yet he obtained a delay of a month, ere she prosecuted her intention of seeking admittance as a pensioner, in the Convent where her early years had been spent.

Anselmo peremptorily refused in his turn to diminish the annuity he had settled upon her ; and when Rosaura again urged

urged the point, he bade her share any little superfluity her economy might give her, with any one in disgrace with Fortune, and the same purpose would be answered as if he consented to receive it back again.

Amidst the apprehensions that assailed the mind of Rosaura when Anselmo left her, that of again encountering Orvino almost equalled the inquietude she could not avoid feeling for the dangerous situation of the thoughtless Ruvello. The sentences that had escaped the Count, his looks and his manner, created in her heart a confused sensation of the most painful anxiety, the most pleasing satisfaction, the flutter of boundless joy, and the tremor of conscious guilt. Unused to the turbulence of such emotions, Rosaura was shocked and alarmed.

“ Let not my soul be thus contaminated by wishes it contemns !” exclaimed she : “ assist me Heaven to banish from my heart an image it should not cherish,

but reject ! Once more—yet once more I must behold Orvino, to bid him a long farewell, to say I am grateful for past benefits, to prohibit any future ones, to tell him I leave the world—and him, for ever ! Weak wretch that I am ; will not these ready tears betray me—will not the sighs that now suffocate me, again burst from my swelling heart, and demonstrate to Orvino the bitterness of the sacrifice I make, to the pleadings of an honour I must not sully, and a conscience that will be heard !”

Beatrice, whose good opinion and entire esteem Rosaura had now won, by suffering her to expiate upon what she thought important events in her history, no sooner heard from Anselmo of the project of retiring to a Convent, than she exclaimed against it very loudly, and called upon her brother, and Orvino, who happened to be with him, to exert their influence to prevent it from taking place.

“ A Convent !” repeated Orvino, the
colour

colour changing on his cheek: "does Signora Ruvello seriously propose it?"

"She does," replied Anselmo gravely.

"But you must persuade her," cried Beatrice, "that it would be a foolish thing to bury herself alive, now that she has friends starting up about her, who will support her in the face of the world. Signor Count Orvino, *you* must beg of her—how can *you* suffer her——"

"I have no influence," interrupted he hastily: "since Ruvello has forfeited his title to advise her, how can the friend of Ruvello hope for that courtesy, that might perhaps have induced her to listen to his counsel in other circumstances. Mistaken, imprudent, frantic Ruvello, what a gem has he cast from him! Signor Anselmo, let not its lustre be lost to the world—let it not set for ever in the dreary gloom of a cloister!"

"I have argued and I have entreated," replied the old man; "and all I could obtain was the delay of one short month."

Orvino mused a moment, then suddenly bidding the brother and sister farewell, he left the house.

Beatrice instantly returned to argue with her fair guest, and Signor Anselmo for a considerable time after her departure, sat pensive and abstracted, forming plans and wishes, which he hoped on a future day to see realized.

The next day, Maria running into the apartment of her Lady with the precipitation usual to her when she brought any pleasing intelligence, insisted that she had seen the Marquis of Viralva enter the house from the carriage of her favourite Count Orvino: and whilst Rosaura trembled in the eagerness of protracted hope, the good Anselmo came to her, to announce her cousin in a more cautious manner; but on finding her already acquainted with his vicinity, Viralva was immediately admitted, who embraced her with fraternal affection, and almost shed tears

as he surveyed her still weak and diminished form.

When the first emotion of their meeting was abated, Julio informed her that the stiletto which had occasioned him his imprisonment, had been recognized by Signor Ernesto di Brandosi, as having been long in the possession of his unworthy uncle ; and that a domestic generally attending on the person of the Duke, had been cited to give his evidence, and finding the fact more than suspected, had unwillingly declared that his master wore it daily in his bosom, and that the sheath from which it was drawn, and which was afterwards found in the possession of the elder Brandosi, had been broken in the contest.

Viralva added, that the Duke had been consequently sentenced to retire to his estate in Calabria for three years, and himself had been liberated.

Rosaura warmly congratulated him upon the conclusion of an adventure which had cost them both so much.

“That my honour is cleared from so foul a stain,” continued Viralva, “nay that I am now restored to liberty, is in consequence of the zeal and exertions of Count Orvino, who sought out the nephew of my opponent—for Signor Ernesto was absent from Naples: and representing the circumstance as I had related it to him, and the stigma cast upon my honour, by an affair in which my fair cousin was likewise so cruelly implicated, the younger Brandosi hastened his return; and immediately on examining the stiletto, exonerated me.”

“I think you have told me that Count Orvino is the particular friend of Ruvello? If, my lovely cousin, your husband resemble his noble and generous friend, your destiny is still a happy one, spite of the cloud that obscures it.”

“Certainly, I should suppose,” said Rosaura with a considerable hesitation in her accents,—“it generally happens, indeed,

indeed, that a coincidence of sentiments and habits creates friendship."

"You were mistaken, however, Rosaura," resumed he eagerly, "in supposing that he thought of the fair Virginia with particular interest. I am convinced of the contrary from several circumstances. But I will relate to you all my obligations to this amiable Orvino: important, though they are, I can think of them without impatience or mortification, when I reflect upon the uncommon degree of delicacy with which they were conferred:—and now his habitation is mine, for he would not receive my refusal, his interest, his his time, his thoughts are employed for my advantage!"

"I am pleased," said Rosaura faintly, "I am happy that you have thus——"

"Your words," interrupted he hastily, "are at variance with your aspect: tell me, do you know or do you think that I am wrong in yielding to the solicitation

of the Count—is there any impropriety of which I am not aware——”

Rosaura, extremely unwilling to deprive her cousin of the active friendship of Orvino, and reflecting that her own retreat from the world must silence the calumnies Countess Almerini and Asavoli had propogated, eagerly hastened to remove the doubts she had unintentionally raised.

“None, none!” exclaimed she: “the friendship of Count Orvino reflects honour upon whoever can obtain it; and that he experiences both interest and esteem for my beloved Julio, accredits his own heart and judgement. That I did not so immediately express this, you must impute to the sick languor that still, at intervals, overpowers me: yet when you tell me of any advantage you have gained over the obstinacy of the evil fortune that has pursued you, I ought better to manifest the joy I feel.”

Viralva

Viralva was satisfied with this explanation, and he then congratulated her on finding so steady and attached a friend as Signor Anselmo.

“Count Orvino has informed me,” added he, “that you have suffered cruelly; and I too well perceive the traces of those sufferings in your altered appearance. Where is the good old man, whose return to Naples so happily rescued you?”

Rosaura perceived that he was ignorant of the share which Orvino had taken in what he called her rescue; but she rather suffered him to remain in the error, than relate any circumstance in which she feared to betray an apparent coldness and reluctance of praise towards the Count, which might excite the surmises of her cousin.

He now left her, to seek Signor Anselmo; and Rosaura having enquired when she should again see him, it was settled that he should take his coffee with her in the afternoon.

Viralva fulfilled the engagement, and

he was accompanied by Orvino, who entered the apartment with a silent salutation, which Rosaura replied to in the same manner.

“This is my deliverer,” exclaimed her cousin, “from infamy and a prison! Welcome him, my dear Rosaura, as the protector of the hapless house of Viralva!”

“Count Orvino is accustomed to the accents of gratitude,” returned she: “from me likewise, he is entitled to the warmest acknowledgments which reiterated benefits can draw from a thankful heart; and I am pleased that I can thus offer them——”

“Forbear, I conjure you!” interrupted he; “and do not mock those trifling efforts which alone I have had the power of making. Marchese di Viralva, your friendship should have spared me this! But let the subject pass. Anselmo tells me, Signora Ruvello, that, disgusted with the beings that compose our world, you propose to withdraw from it to a Convent.”

“It

“Is it so !” asked Viralva ; “Rosaurá, my cousin, would you indeed with your youth, your beauty, and your endowments ; would you deliberately take such a step ?”

“I have many reasons, my dear Julio !” she replied, “to induce me to it, which at present I cannot enumerate without fatiguing you and myself : but if you think my plan a bad one, I will endeavour to justify it, by detailing them on paper, where they will appear to better advantage perhaps, uninterrupted by the effects of that kind impatience I now perceive in your aspect.”

“But what will Signor Ruvello think of this project ?” demanded he : “you could not have received his sanction to it—and surely, my fair cousin, you cannot have forgotten that it is necessary to obtain it !”

Rosaura was extremely embarrassed to reply to this sentence without betraying what it was so necessary to conceal from her

her cousin; and Orvino, who was suddenly struck with this allusion to the sentiments of Ruvello, which he could scarcely suppose her unacquainted with, endeavoured to relieve the confusion he was chagrined to have occasioned: but, Viralva was still unsatisfied and unwilling to let the subject escape him, and Rosaura became extremely alarmed, lest he should suspect the injustice of her husband, and think it right to discuss the point with him in a hostile manner, whenever his residence might be discovered.

At length however, the efforts of Orvino and her own, overcame the tenacity of her cousin, and Rosaura was secretly congratulating herself that his inquisitive jealousy was allayed; when Giovanni entered to inform the Count, that a person who appeared to be a traveller, was then at his house, who said that he had an affair of the utmost importance to communicate to him, and insisted that he should immediately be advertised of it.

“ He

“ He comes from Ruvello !” exclaimed Rosaura in great agitation : “ What can have happened ? Will you, Count Orvino, will you send to me ?”

“ I will hasten to this man, and return instantly,” replied he : “ but calm yourself if possible, I conjure you ; these emotions are too powerful for your weakened health !”

“ Take my cousin Julio with you,” said she hastily. “ There may be danger—this man may be—do not expose yourself——”

Orvino, who was leaving the room, turned back.—“ I will remember,” said he, “ that you have condescended to express solicitude for my safety : but there cannot be any cause for apprehension, whoever this importunate traveller may be.”

“ I will attend you,” said Viralva, if you permit it ; my own wishes second those of Signora Ruvello : and if you should

should be detained, I can then return and give her the information she will anxiously await."

Orvino assented, and they departed together.

The inquietude of Rosaura was increased every moment : she apprehended that the man who had been arrested at Naples, had denounced the hapless Ruvello, and that he might have been enticed on to the frontiers of the kingdom to be sacrificed by the government he had doubly offended.

So terrible, indeed, were her fears and suggestions, that she sent Maria to entreat the presence of Signor Anselmo, if he were at home.

He immediately attended her ; and notwithstanding that his secret apprehensions too well coincided with her's, he endeavoured to inspire her with courage and hope.

After a considerable interval had elapsed, the good old man was on the point of relieving

relieving his own anxiety and her's, by passing to the habitation of Orvino, when Viralva entered the apartment with a disturbed and gloomy aspect.

Rosaura was now almost suffocated with the redoubled beatings of her heart, and regarded him in a silence she had not the power of breaking.

“Signor Marchese, what intelligence do you bring?” asked Anselmo: “Is the arrival of this traveller of importance to Signora Ruvello? She is extremely anxious to be relieved on this subject.”

“Of importance!” repeated he: “No, it would be of little moment to her, since I find she has been suspected, insulted, and wilfully abandoned, by the wretch who ill deserved the honour of calling her his wife!”

“By what means—from whom, exclaimed she in faltering accents, “did you learn——”

“From himself!” thundered Viralva.

“Oh

“ Oh Heaven ! he is then in Naples—it was Ruvello who sent hither !”

“ This precipitation is cruel and improper,” said Anselmo. “ Marchese di Viralva, curb your own feelings, and spare those of your injured cousin ! Recollect, thoughtless young man, how ill she can now endure the effects of a turbulence that, far from avenging, will only add to her sufferings !”

“ Julio, by the love you bear me,” said she in a supplicating tone, which the tremor on her voice, and the paleness of her aspect rendered more affecting, “ by our orphan state I conjure you, by our affinity, by our early friendship, which never yet was broken, I beseech you to forgive the unfortunate Ruvello ! Let me hear you say it, and then conduct me to him.”

“ I will endeavour to forgive him,” replied he, taking her clasped hands in his ; “ but it will be a hard task, Rosaura ;
and

and when I behold you with your health thus broken, your happiness thus blighted, your spirits fled, nay, even your honour questioned—by Heaven it cannot be ! How can I forgive the villain who could add contumely and insult to the ills he alone has occasioned !”

“ And therefore you would plant another thorn in the bosom already so cruelly wounded,” said Anselmo, “ as an offering to the magnanimity of your own character !”

“ Signor Anselmo, you are privileged
——”

“ If you allow the privilege of age, Signor Marchese, respect it.”

“ Where, unkind Julio,” asked Rosaura, “ where must I seek my unhappy husband ?”

“ Reflect that he is proscribed,” said Anselmo : “ recollect that he must not be seen in Naples, and that the secret must be guarded with vigilance.”

“ But

“But where is he concealed?” demanded Rosaura.

“In the house of Count Orvino,” replied Viralva: “but, my beloved cousin, why this agonizing emotion for a man who so little deserves your concern or care?”

“Did he demand, did he wish to see me?” enquired she.

The reply of Viralva was prevented by the entrance of Giovanni, who said that Count Orvino begged to be admitted to Signora Ruvello.

She eagerly advanced to meet him.—“How is your unfortunate friend?” demanded she: “and what, alas! can have induced him to rush thus upon a danger he was so well aware of?”

“A fatal necessity,” replied Orvino, “which he was compelled to submit to! To-morrow he entreats that you will suffer yourself to be conducted to him—and I conjure you to employ the interval in composing

posing and strengthening your spirits, that the sight of a penitent who deplores that he has offended you, whose mind is all distraction and remorse——”

“ And why may I not instantly fly to sooth and calm his distracted mind !” exclaimed Rosaura, in whose compassionate heart all sense of injury or displeasure was obliterated, “ Why must I wait till to-morrow——”

“ He requires repose,” returned Orvino, “ ere any new or increased agitation assail him : and you likewise, Signora Ruvello, your health, your feeble situation——”

“ Should be the only consideration in this case,” interrupted Viralva, starting from a reverie : “ to-morrow, or the day following, will be time enough to receive the excuses of this madman.”

Anselmo, now intimated that Rosaura should instantly be left to the care of Beatrice and her attendants ; indeed she felt so faint and languid, that she consented it should be so, and Count Orvino
having

having appointed an hour for her visit on the next morning, drew Viralva out of the room.

CHAP. IX.

ROSAURA would have passed an anxious and sleepless night, had not Dame Beatrice at the instigation of her brother, given her a gentle soporific, which co-operating with the fatigue and lassitude occasioned by the agitations she had endured, obtained for her some hours of repose that much refreshed and invigorated her.

Signor Anselmo heard this with the most benevolent pleasure; and as soon as he found that she was ready to receive him

him in the morning, he desired admission to her.

As Rosaura now every passing moment dreaded some afflicting event, she was much relieved when, after a short preface, he told her that he merely wished to relate to her what had befallen Ruvello, that she might not imagine him either more unfortunate or more imprudent than he actually was.

“The man lately arrested,” pursued Signor Anselmo, “and who introduced himself to you, I find, as his friend, is associated with several wretches of desperate fortunes, who have insinuated themselves by means either of talents or artifices, into the confidence of official men in different governments; and this knot of adventurers live, it seems in luxurious indolence, by betraying the one to the other. Signor Ruvello, being a man of birth, good sense and good address, and being likewise in disgrace with fortune, was thought a proper subject to be
initiated

initiated into this pernicious society, and was deceived by them into a hope of obtaining a post of honour and profit in one of these courts : but whilst they were drawing him by degrees into their lure, the lavish extravagance in which the whole party constantly lived, had involved one of the villains in embarrassments so considerable, that the society was unable to extricate him from them. In this emergency, the double traitor betrayed his coadjutors for a specified reward ; our government seized the man you saw, and the name and person of Ruvello having been described by one of the set, who hoped to obtain mercy by pretending to make further discoveries, he was sought for on the papal territory as a spy, and compelled, as the lesser danger, to venture into that of Naples.

“ Having now no other resource, he safely travelled in a disguise even hither, fortunately attained the mansion of Count Orvino undiscovered, and being there unde-

undeceived respecting the infamous tale Countess Almerini took incredible trouble to transmit to him, he wishes, yet fears to behold you, and receive your forgiveness for his injurious credulity and the barbarous letter that resulted from it."

"I will go this instant!" exclaimed she, wiping a tear from her eye.

"Yet a moment," resumed Anselmo: "you must expect to see him much altered—fatigue and anxiety have in some degree impaired his health I find, yet not so materially, but that a few days of quiet and undisturbed repose will re-establish it. And now, let me solicit you to think of yourself in the approaching interview, and endeavour to avoid emotions to which you are both unequal."

Rosaura promised to observe his injunction in both instances; and then, accompanied by this good man and his sister Beatrice, she entered a carriage, which in ten minutes stopped at the portal of Orvino's mansion.

He almost instantly appeared at the door of it, and conducted Rosaura and her companions into a saloon, where perceiving that she was much agitated, he put into the hands of Beatrice some restoratives he had provided, and she compelled her fair patient to make use of them.

“ Oh, Count Orvino !” exclaimed Rosaura, “ How is your hapless friend ?— Is he indeed safe here ? Can you confide in your household—will they not betray the secret ?”

“ To one only, an ancient female servant, has it been confided,” replied he : “ the traveller to whom I was called, openly quitted the house, and returned to it in another disguise by way of precaution ; yet so privately, that no one suspects it to contain my guest, who inhabits a cabinet to which I alone have generally access, and where besides myself, no human being, save the woman I mentioned, of whose fidelity I have had long proof,

proof, has been admitted. When you are composed, I will conduct you to this asylum."

"I am composed," returned she.

"Alas, no," said Orvino, taking her trembling hand, and replacing her on the seat from which she had arisen; "these agitations are too powerful for a frame so weak! In compassion to those who have life only in an existence so precious, exert yourself to tranquillize your mind, and govern its generous emotions."

"I can be tranquil only when I have seen my husband," returned she: "lead me to him, I entreat you."

Orvino obeyed; and conducting her through two adjoining rooms, took a key from his pocket, and unlocking a door at the extremity of them, a hollow voice, that made Rosaura start, exclaimed as he opened it—"Orvino, is she come?"

"Signora Ruvello accompanies me," replied he. Then turning to Rosaura—

“Ruvello is indisposed this morning,” he added, “and has not yet risen.”

Rosaura advancing to a couch, which had been adjusted as a bed to accommodate the exile, beheld her husband extended upon it, pale, emaciated, and apparently exhausted.

“Oh, Heaven!” exclaimed she, “you are ill—Ruvello, you are very ill—you must have suffered severely!”

“It is fit I should,” replied he, as he mournfully surveyed her: “but you, oh, most injured and best of women, why were you fated to be a martyr to the faults, the follies, from which your nature is exempt!”

He turned from her to conceal his emotion; and Rosaura, unable to speak, bathed his hand with her tears; for she could not witness the miserable and enfeebled state of the once gay, once animated Ruvello, without evincing that tender pity, which in its effects so much resembles affection: whilst Orvino silently surveying

surveying the scene, thought the fate of his guest still enviable, since he had not lost the love of Rosaura.

“It is an aggravation of my guilt,” resumed Ruvello, “that you do not hate me! This gentleness pierces me to the soul! Oh, Rosaura, can I regard that still lovely form, which I have stripped of its bloom, and feel the pressure of those faded lips, without plunging a dagger into my bosom, to expiate at least the suspicions I should never have admitted, and the barbarity of that cursed scrawl!”

“Who could suspect that a human being could be so malignant,” returned she, “as to invent and circulate so cruel, so blighting a calumny! Who could believe it possible that Countess Almerini
_____”

“I should have believed every thing possible,” interrupted he, “but that Rosaura could sink into infamy and vice. But, Oh, I was goaded to madness by

my own imprudence, my own guilt, and like a fiend——”

“ You distress Signora Ruvello,” said Orvino, placing a seat for her by the side of the couch, “ and you harass your own feelings by dwelling thus on what cannot be recalled. Let us now, my friend, discuss our projects for the future, and Signora Ruvello will either sanction them with her approbation, or amend them with her advice.”

Orvino then proceeded to say, that when the health of Ruvello should be sufficiently re-established, he intended to embark, in a vessel belonging to Signor Anselmo, for Florence.

“ Whither I will assuredly accompany him,” said Rosaura firmly.

“ Ah no, no !” returned her husband : “ how could I endure that you should appear as the wife of an adventurer. I must drop my own appellation—for, oh, Rosaura, I have indelibly disgraced it,
and

and my credulous folly has rendered it an unsafe one. Your virtues have procured you a firm and essential friend in Signor Anselmo, a protector in Orvino. Retain these advantages—reside in this place where your birth and rank may be acknowledged, where your merit will successfully combat the envy it has created, and where you will find, when anxiety and remorse have sent me to the tomb, a lover and a husband worthy of Rosaura di Viralva !”

At a conclusion so unexpected, Orvino turned suddenly away, and walked to the extent of the cabinet.

“ Now, indeed, you offend me,” said Rosaura, “ and compel me, if I am not allowed to accompany you, to follow you at every event. Had you before indulged my wish, perhaps my anxiety for your welfare would have given me the power of averting some of the evils—but that is past. Having once more beheld you as

you now are, I will never consent to a separation by which you may again miss the attendance and the tenderness it is my duty and my wish to offer you."

Ruvello returned an indirect reply, neither rejecting her proposition, nor assenting to it; and as he appeared much affected by a conversation, of which every sentence could not but agitate him deeply, Orvino hinted to Rosaura that it would be prudent to withdraw: she wished however, to remain with her sick husband, that she might herself tender those services so necessary to his comfort and convenience; but Ruvello, as well as the Count, represented to her the impossibility of it, without awakening a suspicion in the minds of the domestics, that might prove fatal to him.

Rosaura was then going; but she turned back to inform her husband of the beneficence of the good Anselmo, and to congratulate him that he was thus
assured

assured of a competency respectable even for a man of his rank.

Ruvéllò shook his head.—“ Farewell, generous, inestimable creature, farewell!” said he, sighing.

The Count re-conducted her to the saloon where she was awaited by Anselmo and his sister, who were much pleased to observe that she had not apparently suffered so much from the interview as they had apprehended she would.

Soon after the return of Rosaura to her present asylum, Viralva called in; and she then endeavoured to soften his resentment against her unfortunate husband, by representing, with the eloquence natural to her, his deep remorse, his ruined prospects, and his injured health: but as the effect was not entirely successful, she would not mention to him that she meant immediately to renew her visit, but allowed the subject to drop.

Julia then informed her, that as the court was at that instant in Sicily, and he

had received through the friendship of Count Orvino, several recommendatory introductions to those Noblemen who were most in the royal favour, it would be proper that he should follow them thither, which he thought of doing in the evening, unless, indeed, by remaining in Naples, he could serve or protect her.

Rosaura gratefully acknowledged his brotherly affection, but reminded him of the paternal kindness she experienced from Signor Anselmo, and exhorted him to pursue his intention ; to which he agreed, and they parted with mutual esteem and good-will.

The next day Beatrice would again have accompanied Rosaura to the house of Count Orvino : but as it was extremely necessary that this quick repetition of her visit should be concealed from the numerous train of servants who infest the houses of the Neapolitan Nobles, it was deferred until the twilight should favour her removal ;

removal; and then wrapped in her veil, she placed herself under the protection of Giovanni, to whose discretion and fidelity the secret had been confided, and was followed at a small distance by Signor Anselmo and one of his servants, as a further safeguard.

Giovanni conducted her in security to a door that opened into the garden of the Orvino Palace, and Anselmo then turned back. The place was shaded by trees that overhung it from the garden, and Giovanni had some little difficulty to fit the key which had been given him to the lock of the door: whilst he was endeavouring to effect this, Rosaura observed a man wrapped in a cloak, who was evidently regarding their motions with curiosity.

This circumstance alarmed her, and disconcerted Giovanni, to whom she imparted it in a whisper; and instead of entering the garden without hesitation,

he withdrew the key and retired several paces, drawing Rosaura after him.

The person who was watching them, now vanished ; and after some interval, Giovanni supposing him to have quitted the place, again advanced to the door, which he soon succeeded in opening. In the interim, Rosaura, who was gazing in extreme perturbation, in the direction their suspicious observer had taken, beheld him creeping round the angle of a wall almost close to her. The sudden shock overpowered her ; and uttering a faint shriek, she seized the arm of her conductor, and was sinking to the earth, when he fortunately caught her, and prevented the fall.

Count Orvino, who was in the garden, awaiting the approach of Rosaura, heard the scream, and instantly rushing out, discerned a female figure apparently lifeless, which his heart forboded to be Rosaura ; and the voice of Giovanni calling

calling to him for assistance, confirmed the horrid surmise.

“What does this mean?” exclaimed he, snatching her from her terrified attendant, and bearing her towards a pavilion—“What has alarmed this devoted angel?”

“I know not,” replied Giovanni; except that a fellow was skulking here a few minutes back: but I stayed till he went his way, and saw nothing further to frighten my Lady when she screamed.”

When they reached the pavilion, the beams of the moon enabled Orvino to observe that his lovely burthen was still pale and senseless.

“Fly to the fountain, Giovanni,” said he, “and bring some water in your hat!”

“On which side is the fountain?” demanded Giovanni.

“To the left of this place. Fly!

fly!—you will be directed by the noise and glitter of the water.”

Giovanno obeyed; and the Count pressing the lifeless Rosaura to his bosom, secretly anathemised the various causes of those sufferings that rent his heart, scarcely excepting Ruvello himself in his execrations.

Giovanno returned not however; and dreadfully alarmed at the length of the fit, Orvino vainly chafed her hands and temples.

“Where,” exclaimed he, “is this tardy blockhead—why comes he not?”

At length Giovanno re-appeared, the water dripping from every part of his garments, which the Count was too much occupied to perceive.

“What in the name of Heaven detained you?” asked he impatiently, as he dipped his hand into the hat to sprinkle the face of Rosaura.

“Illustrissimo,” returned Giovanno,
“as

“ as I was stooping to get the water from the bason of the fountain, something pulled my hat away ; and when I tried to snatch it back, I lost my balance, and fell in.——It was Pasquino the great dog, who was swimming in the bason, and served me this trick ; and after all, I was obliged to follow him round a dozen times, to get my hat again !”

“ Run to the house,” said Orvino, “ and desire old Colombina to attend——yet no—I believe, I hope your Lady revives.”

Rosaura breathed a deep sigh, and the next minute uttered some inarticulate sounds.

Orvino anxiously enquired how she found herself, and she returned a demand of where she had been conveyed.

“ You are in the protection of the most devoted of friends,” replied he ; “ and when you find yourself able to remove, I will assist you to Ruvello, for
I fear

I fear he will be inexpressibly uneasy at my long stay."

"I will go this moment," said she rising; but her strength was unequal to her intention, and very slowly she moved forward, notwithstanding the aid she received from Orvino.

Ere they had advanced a hundred paces, the glare of a flambeau which approached in a contrary direction from the house, alarmed the whole party.

"Who goes there?" demanded Orvino, in a tone of mingled anger and surprise; for it was evident that they were pursued by whoever carried the light.

"Diamine!" ejaculated Giovanni, "in my concern for my Lady, I forgot to fasten the door we came in at!"

Rosaura could now scarcely sustain herself; and the Count finding she could not proceed, repeated his demand with an indignation not untinged with secret dread, when he discerned three or four men within a few paces of him.

No

“ No reply was immediately made, except that an insulting laugh broke on his ear and that of the trembling Rosaura, which they soon discovered to proceed from Countess Almerini, who now stood before them.

“ Count Orvino,” said she, “ forgive me this ill-timed encounter. In truth, you ought to forgive it, since it results from my fears for your safety. One of my servants accidentally beheld some people entering your garden in a manner too suspicious not to be remarked ; and as I happened to be at the house of a friend adjoining to this spot, he made known to the attendants who were in waiting with my carriage, what he had observed. He related too, that he heard some one call for assistance—but who have you here?—Signora Ruvello ! Nay then, I perceive that I have been very indiscreet. Yet who could imagine that the immaculate Count Orvino——”

“ Stop, vindictive woman !” exclaimed
he :

he: "arrest that licentious tongue, and let it not further wound a heart, whose purity your gross mind cannot conceive! Dismiss your servants—why I see you here I know not, since the tale you have uttered is palpably false. Dismiss your servants, enter the house with me, and learn from what you will there discover, to blush at insinuations so vile and injurious!"

"Hold, Count Orvino," said Rosaura with considerable energy, "the trust reposed in you is sacred! Let this barbarous woman still pursue me with insults my soul repels; but do not betray a confidence you should not on any consideration allow yourself to violate."

"Well repeated!" exclaimed the Countess, sneeringly; "now the Cavalier should urge his point, which no doubt you will successfully combat!"

"This is too much!" said Orvino in a rage: "direct your myrmidons to retire; or I will myself drive them hence."

"I will

“ I will so,” she replied ; “ for I am impatient to attain the promised discovery.”

Then giving the required orders to her servants, they instantly withdrew, attended by Giovanni, who was commissioned to secure the door at which they had entered. The Countess then, with a mien at once imperious and exulting, desired to be conducted to the scene that was to compel her to blushes of repentance for vile and unjust insinuations : but Rosaura, dreading her loquacity and indiscretion, again reminded Orvino that the secret he wished to impart to her was not his own.

“ The aspersions of this woman *must* be checked, or they will know no bounds !” replied he, leading her unwilling steps towards the house, whilst Countess Alme-rini eagerly followed them.

When they reached the entrance, Orvino cautioned the Countess to accompany them in silence.—“ If you comply not,” added he,

he, “you will accomplish a ruin, which even yourself, lost as you are to every generous feeling, will rue!”

“Your compliments are gallant,” returned she with smothered fury: “lead on however, I will yield to your injunction, nor leave you a single pretence to defer this important discovery which is to overwhelm me.”

Orvino, still supporting his trembling charge, opened a small door, and entered a passage where an old woman awaited him with a light.

“We follow you,” said he in a low tone, and the ancient dame stepping forward, preceded the party up a narrow winding staircase, that communicated, by a passage, with the saloon Rosaura had been conducted to the day before.

Orvino taking the light from the woman, desired her to remain there.—“Now, Countess Almerini,” added he, “advance and behold what attracts this lady to the mansion she now honours.”

A skull

“ A skull and cross bones, no doubt,” returned she ; “ which, with the relief of black drapery, always appear to advantage by moonlight. Perhaps *the lady* thinks midnight the most proper hour for such contemplation, and remains till day dawns, wrapped in pious meditation !”

“ Incurrible wretch !” exclaimed Orvino in the highest disgust : “ enter that cabinet—here is the key.”

She snatched it from him with mingled disdain, curiosity and rage ; “ and throwing open the door, started back on beholding Ruvello traversing the room.

“ Proceed,” said the Count, seizing her arm and impelling her forward. “ Ruvello,” he added, “ this woman for some infernal purpose, has lately caused each avenue to my house to be watched. I had a slight suspicion of this some days back, and now she has convinced me of it ! Her emissaries, faithful to their trust, advertised her no doubt this night, of a circumstance they diligently noted ; and inter-

intercepting your injured Rosaura in her progress to you, she has wounded her ears with the vilest taunts and insults. To stifle her eager calumnies in their birth, I have disclosed the secret to her, on which your life depends—and now, absolve or condemn me!”

“ You have done well, my friend,” returned Ruvello; “ and should my life be the forfeit, I should think it cheaply sacrificed to wipe from the name of an angel, one of those unmerited stains which my family have cast most cruelly and unrelentingly upon it !”

“ An angel !” repeated the Countess contemptuously; “ what infatuation is this, when you are fully acquainted——”

At this moment a vociferation and noise was heard in the further apartment, at which Ruvello started. — “ I am betrayed !” exclaimed he, on distinguishing amidst the few accents that could be understood, the words “ *prisoner, discovered, arrested!*” and sentences imparting that the culprit was

was on the demesnes of Count Orvino; who now quitted the cabinet, and flew towards those sounds he trembled to have heard. He did not immediately re-appear: but his voice was raised more than once, to silence the uproar, which could not however, be quelled even by his authority.

Countess Almerini herself appeared shocked and appalled; and Rosaura supported herself on the side of the couch in an agony of terror, expecting every moment the officers of justice to burst in and seize Ruvello.

The commotion and its authors had now reached the saloon; and the intervening doors having been left open, they appeared to be still nearer than they actually were.

A deeper horror took possession of the mind of Ruvello.—“This is not to be endured!” exclaimed he: “I will no longer be the sport of my evil destiny!”—And rushing out of the cabinet, he followed

lowed the steps of the Count, notwithstanding that Rosaura suddenly sprang forward to prevent it : but his motion was too rapid to be arrested by her feeble efforts ; and darting into the saloon—
“ Here is your victim !” said he fiercely :
“ and now—seize him !”

A deathlike silence ensued for a few seconds ; but a most horrible confusion of sounds succeeded it—shrieks and groans appeared to be indiscriminately uttered, and these were replaced by lamentation.

Rosaura, transfixed to the spot, could neither breathe nor move ; whilst Countess Almerini, regardless of her situation, hastened to appease her own wonder, and satisfy her own curiosity. At length, however, Rosaura summoning all her remaining strength to aid her purpose, tottered across the two rooms ; and in the third, the sanguine current froze in her own veins, on beholding near the entrance, a stream of blood newly shed, which her
eye

eye traced to a couch, round which several people were eagerly bending, amongst whom were Orvino and Countess Almerini.

“Ruvello!—Oh, Heaven!—Ruvello!” exclaimed she.

Orvino turned towards her an aspect of distress; and hastening to support her, peremptorily commanded every one to retire, save Giovanni and the old woman who had hitherto attended the unhappy suicide.

He was soon obeyed; and having aided them both to bind up the wound Ruvello had given himself, Giovanni, at his own request, flew to hasten the surgeons who had been already sent to.

Ruvello now opened his glassy eyes, and, in a faint accent, desired that Rosaura should approach him. When, with trembling eagerness she had complied with his request, he told her she was avenged.

“The stroke that widows you, Rosaura,” added he, “gives you happiness!”

“ Oh, Ruvello,” exclaimed she weeping, “ embitter not my anguish by language like this !”

“ He should not exhaust himself by talking at all,” said Countess Almerini eagerly : “ neither should you agitate him with this display of fine feeling—in this instance at least, it will highly become you to act like a reasonable woman !”

“ Remove her from my sight,” cried Ruvello, “ I cannot endure to behold her !”

“ I will remove her,” returned the Countess. “ Signora Ruvello, I will lead you away—you hear what my unfortunate cousin requests ; you had better withdraw !”

Orvino, relieve me from this fiend !” exclaimed Ruvello, with such impetuosity that the blood gushed anew from his wound.

“ Demon of malice, retire !” said Orvino, in a tone of restrained rage :
“ insensible,

“insensible, hardened as you are, how can you behold this scene which you alone have occasioned——”

“I have occasioned!” interrupted she with disdainful incredulity.

“Quit the house,” resumed he, endeavouring to assist Rosaura in staunching the blood flowing from the side of Ruvello: “quit the house, or I shall forget the sex and rank you disgrace, and force you hence.”

“Not until you explain your insolent charge, nor until I behold my cousin in safe hands. I am not to learn the interest you have in preventing his recovery.”

“Monster of depravity!” exclaimed Orvino: “you are the cause, the only cause of this disaster, by encompassing me with spies, who insolently prowled round my dwelling, and even entered my garden, where one of these wretches was attacked and overpowered by a faithful animal, and his cries attracted the notice of my servants. Here in this

saloon, he confessed by whom he was employed, and that others like him received the pay of Countess Almerini, for the purpose of watching my steps! Now is my charge explained! My friend fatally mistaking the suspicious sounds he heard——”

“Your friend!” repeated she with an aspect of deadly malice. “Well, I leave you with your friend, and your friend’s wife!”

Rosaura, unable to endure the complicated emotions that wrung her heart, sunk on the wounded bosom of her husband; and two or three surgeons just then appearing, led in by Giovanni, she was taken, by the direction of Orvino, to another apartment, where several female servants attended, and emulously endeavoured to revive her: but Rosaura, stunned by the horrid event she had so little expected, and horror-stricken by the violence and accusation of Countess Almerini at a moment so dreadful, remained
in

in a state of alarming stupefaction and inactivity, until the sudden appearance of Beatrice awakened her attention.

“Is the good Signor Anselmo here?” asked she eagerly.

“Yes, he accompanied me,” replied Beatrice: “but I cannot rightly understand why Giovanni was sent to bring us in such a hurry. Is it true that Signor Ruvello is killed?”

Ruvello was spared the pain of replying, by a message which was brought from Count Orvino, who waited in the anti-room to speak to Signora Beatrice.

This good woman soon returned, and with an aspect of mingled compassion and horror, informed Rosaura that her husband wished to speak to her if she were not too ill to go to him.

“I am not too ill,” replied she, making an effort to rise: “I am able to go. He is then alive—tell me, will he yet recover?”

“Alack, no, they say not,” replied Beatrice bluntly.

“ Oh Heaven !—assist me—drag me forward !—let me see him once more !”

Almost carried by the attendants, Rosaura at length reached the saloon, from which Ruvello had not been able to endure the motion of removing ; and when he beheld her, he stretched out his hand, but could not immediately speak.

Orvino, who, with Signor Anselmo, stood by the couch on which he was stretched, made a sudden effort to retire ; but Ruvello begged him, in a feeble and inward voice, to remain. Orvino then turned back, and the good Anselmo arranged a commodious seat for Rosaura, who gazed in grief and terror upon the death-like aspect of her husband.

“ I have sent to my aunt Alviano,” said Ruvello, “ that she may witness my last moments, hear my last request, and bear testimony to my last will : for despoiled as I have been, I have yet a treasure to bequeath !”

“ Do not,” interrupted Rosaura, “ do
not

not, my dear Ruvello, harrass yourself with any testamentary act!—you may yet live—you will, I hope! But should Heaven ordain it otherwise, leave to your heirs whatever they may expect to share, and to me leave the consoling, the heart-cheering assurance of your unabated esteem and affection!”

“To the most disinterested, the most honourable of men,” returned Ruvello with a momentary animation, “and not to my heirs, I will give my treasure! Alas, I have not sufficiently valued it, and now inexorable death—the death I invited so rashly, snatches me for ever from it!”

Rosaura wept, and a long pause ensued, which neither Anselmo nor his younger friend could break; and in the interim, Giovanni entered to say that Signora Alviano was arrived.

“Hasten her hither,” said Ruvello in a hollow voice: then collecting himself, and summoning all his remnant of strength,

he desired to be gently raised ; and whilst Orvino supported him in his arms, Signora Alviano entered, with a slow and reluctant step.

Rosaura bowed her head in silence ; and Ruvello regarding her fixedly, enquired what accession of happiness she had gained, by retaining from himself and his hapless wife, the produce of the estate she had claimed.

“ My duty to my child,” hesitated the lady, “ and other considerations——”

“ As for me,” resumed he in a fainter voice, “ I want it not—my race is run ! But for this dear injured, persecuted being, whom my follies have martyred——”

“ I promise you solemnly,” interrupted Signora Alviano, “ to pay her pension in a Convent, until she chuses to take the veil : and that, you must be sensible, is the only thing she can now do with propriety—nay even decency !”

“ Yes, one alternative is left her,” said Ruvello, pausing every moment to regain the
the

the breath that almost wholly failed him: “you refuse then to share with her the estate you have claimed? Be it so! I charge her therefore, I supplicate, I command her——”

“I will retire to a Convent,” said Rosaura in a hurrying accent, “I will take the veil! Think no more of me; attend to a more important concern, my husband. Make your peace with Heaven, while yet——”

Tears impeded her further utterance.

“Against you I have most sinned,” returned he, “and I make my peace with Heaven, by making your welfare my last care. Give me your promise—pledge it to me sacredly, as to a dying wretch, that you will accept as a defender, a protector, a husband, the man whose generous heart now throbs against my languid pulse; and quickens its low beatings—say that you will reward the virtues of Orvino, who loved you, yet preserved his rigid honour, who could not but envy

the husband of her he adored; yet was faithful to the friendship he had once professed ! It is to Signora Alviano I owe the knowledge of his attachment; for her insinuations first induced me to form the observations I have made.— And now, Rosaura, grant me the promise I demand—I even exact it of you, as the last testimony of duty and affection you can ever give me !”

“ What have you asked !” exclaimed she. Alas, my dear Ruvello, the pain you feel, and the loss of blood, have impaired—have confused—Surely you cannot——”

“ In this you judge rightly,” said Signora Alviano eagerly : “ my nephew must not be indulged in this request, which only his present situation could excuse. I am certain his head is so much disordered, that he does not even comprehend——”

Ruvello now fainted; and Count Orvino casting upon Rosaura a look expressive
of

of disappointment and reproach, resigned him to a surgeon, who having been stationed in the adjoining chamber, was now hastily summoned.

“ He is dead !” exclaimed Signora Alviano ; “ Why was not a Confessor called, and extreme unction administered to him, instead of encouraging or allowing the lamentable wandering I have just heard !”

Rosaura gazed in silent agony upon the lifeless aspect, and was too much occupied by her own reflections to attend to this apostrophe, which was not however, equally unremarked by Orvino, who instantly left the room.

“ He is not dead, Signora Illustrissima,” said the surgeon, “ and will live, I doubt not, until every duty of religion be performed ; but they must not assuredly be delayed.”

“ If you are entitled to give directions in this household,” resumed the Lady, addressing Anselmo with a haughty mien,

order immediately that some one hasten, without losing a moment, to the Padre San Severo of the Carthusians—and let him be told, that I beg his instant attendance here. If you are not entitled to issue orders, receive mine to that effect.”

“*Illustrissima*,” replied Anselmo coolly, “I am not entitled to give directions in this house, neither am I accustomed to receive directions, given as your’s are, in any habitation! But we will now wave any further discussion upon the subject; for Signor Ruvello revives!”

Signora Alviano instantly flew to the anti-room, where she summoned several domestics, and was instructing them to execute the commission she would have given Anselmo, when Orvino entered it, and informed her that he had already sent to a pious and worthy Dominican, to whom his unfortunate friend was known.

Signora Alviano insisted however, that pious and worthy though he might be, he should be superceded by the Padre San Severo,

Severo, and Orvino then referred the subject to Ruvello himself.

“He is evidently unable to judge what is most for his benefit,” said she: “the strange absurdities he uttered just now, would convince any one of that, who was not pre-determined against conviction.”

Orvino turned away in silent disgust, and passed on to the saloon, where Ruvello was now impatiently awaiting his appearance.

“Approach, my friend,” said he, “and remove the scruples of Rosaura, who still hesitates to give me the promise which alone will satisfy my anxious heart, and send me in peace to the grave that yawns to receive me! Orvino, lay aside all worldly punctilio, and declare, with undisguised truth, whether an indissoluble union with her would not give you happiness? Say more—could you without such an union be happy?”

“Hitherto,” returned he with an embarrassed air, “I have not ventured—

I was forbidden by honour—by the most sacred of laws—but oh, Ruvello, you should be cautious of raising those hopes which cannot be realised—unless—horrid! I talk of hopes founded on the most afflicting event. Yet you call upon me to reply with truth undisguised, and thus I answer:—had not Signora Ruvello, when first I beheld her, been a wife, I would have sought to have made her mine, had all mankind opposed and rivalled me; and no obstacle, however potent, save her aversion, could have forced me to give up the contest!”

“ You hear him,” said Ruvello faintly : “ what now prevents you? I suffer until your word be pledged, and my strength recedes very fast. I would yield to the duties religion enjoins, and you defer them, perhaps until it be too late !”

Rosaura turned her supplicating eyes on Anselmo; and panting with agony, even thought the entrance of Signora Alviano a relief.

“ What

“What can I do!” exclaimed she: Oh, Heaven, what ought I——! Dear, but mistaken Ruvello, think what it is you require!”

“Signora Ruvello,” interrupted Anselmo, “you have appealed to my judgment, silently indeed, but I feel it to be an appeal; and therefore I presume to say that the promise your husband implores from your affection, and demands from your duty, you should not scruple to give, as the concession is not an act of guilt or immorality, and as his exaction proceeds from a generous anxiety——”

“Not an immoral act!” said Signora Alviano indignantly: “by whom is my unfortunate nephew surrounded? It is indeed time to deliver him from such shocking, such blasphemous counsellors! and the power of the Church in the person of Father San Severo, shall soon rid him——”

“Rosaura, by your hopes of eternal happiness!”

happiness!" exclaimed Ruvello with an animation almost supernatural, "by the obedience you solemnly vowed to me at the altar, yield to my ardent prayer, or I must die with the dreadful anguish of leaving you at the mercy of those furies, who would taunt, and crush, and trample on you, till your senses or your life—— Oh, God! I die—now—I die—and you refuse——!"

"Ah no, no!" exclaimed she, overpowered by the agony his aspect indicated, "I cannot refuse an adjuration thus enforced! I comply—I promise—I solemnly promise to give my hand to Count Orvino, should he claim it, at the expiration of——"

"One year," said Ruvello, in an inward voice.

"Of one year, if such be your will," added she, bursting into a fresh flood of tears.

"I thank you, Rosaura: "and now
to

to confession—to prayer. Dry your tears—you have given me peace. Farewell—for ever !”

Signora Alviano had again flown to the anti chamber, and Anselmo perceiving the Dominican enter it, and that Rosaura was sinking to the ground, whilst Orvino was withheld by delicacy from assisting her, carried her himself to another apartment, and delivered her to the care of his sister.

Ruvello, still possessing his faculties undiminished, was left with the Confessor Orvino had sent to ; and the Count himself guarded him from the apprehended intrusion of the Padre San Severo, spite of the vehement expostulations of Signora Alviano, who, finding herself offended, contradicted and vanquished, left the house in a rage.

When the Dominican, and another Friar of the same Convent who had assisted him, had administered the extreme unction to Ruvello, he called for Rosaura, who hurried

hurried to him, and he extorted from her a still more binding vow, to unite herself with Orvino at the expiration of a year.

He then acknowledged in broken periods, the paternal friendship of the good Anselmo towards her, and conjured him still to watch over the too lovely victim of envious malice and narrow avarice. All exertion of voice, or power of motion, soon after failed him, and towards the morning he breathed his last sigh in the arms of Orvino.

Signora Beatrice and her brother instantly supported their almost exhausted charge into a carriage that awaited them, and carried her to their own hospitable mansion; where Rosaura could scarcely doubt but that the misrepresentations of Countess Almerini and Signora Alviano would still pursue her.

CHAP. X.

THE impression of a scene so dreadful to the sensibility that characterised Rosaura, and the astonishment and terror with which she now reflected upon the solemn promise she had been induced to make to her deceased husband, a circumstance which she feared would excite endless surmise and universal disapprobation, banished, for a considerable time, peace from her bosom and sleep from her pillow : but at length the cares and remonstrances of the worthy Anselmo, and the rigid propriety with which Orvino conducted himself towards her, reconciled her

her to herself, and calmed her inquietude: for though he evinced much anxiety for her health, he attempted not to enter the house where she had refuged herself, and even avoided any intercourse with his ancient friend, but by letter.

From Signor Anselmo, Rosaura learned that the family of Ruvello had taken charge of the funeral, on which they had expended a very considerable sum, that it might be sufficiently splendid to gratify their misplaced pride: but that Countess Almerini had refused any contribution towards it, which the embarrassed state of her affairs would have amply excused, had she thought proper to assign this as a motive; but as she had imputed her refusal to resentment against her deceased cousin, she had been much censured by the other branches of the family. Rosaura learned too, that Signor Andrea di Ruvello was every hour expected in Naples; and that he had received, though by what means Anselmo did not mention, a very favourable

favourable impression of his fair, though unknown, cousin.

“And now I shall perhaps surprise you,” concluded the good old man, “with the intelligence that Countess Almerini, notwithstanding all that has happened, has just now sent a billet to me, to entreat my mediation with you in her behalf; or at least, to desire that I will dispose you, by representing her great affection, to receive her favourably.”

“This I can never do,” replied Rosaura: “on the contrary, if I can avoid it, I will never see her more!”

Anselmo very much applauded her resolution; and then informed her that this unexpected humility of the Countess resulted from apprehension alone.

“She has borrowed a considerable sum,” added she, “from a man over whom she has now discovered that I have great influence, and she wishes me to exert it, to prevent his increasing importunity to be repaid. But let us dismiss an unworthy subject,

subject, and allow me now, my amiable daughter, to speak to you on the wish, you have testified to Beatrice I find, to retire to the Convent, of which you call the good Abbess, who distinguished your childhood, your benefactress."

Anselmo then represented to her that she should not appear to avoid Signor Andrea di Ruvello, nor should she apparently retire from the malicious shafts which others of the family might wish to aim at her.

"If a Convent be your preferable choice for your year of widowhood," said he, "select for your retreat any one in this place, and then all Naples will be empowered to testify to the propriety of your conduct."

Rosaura acquiesced in this friendly advice, the wisdom of which she immediately perceived; and Anselmo mentioned to her a Sisterhood whose abode was the resort of several women of distinction, and who received only ladies of the strictest honour.

honour. With her concurrence, he arranged her reception with these recluses, who being chiefly of high rank, upon which the whole Convent piqued itself much, had been so improvident and lavish, that the merchant Anselmo held a considerable portion of their lands and demesnes in mortgage.

A few days after the conference, Rosaura retired to these holy walls, spite of the entreaties of Signora Beatrice, who now wondered at herself for having ever wished to expel so gentle and amiable a creature.

As she was quitting the hospitable mansion of her paternal friend, and bidding him adieu with tears of affection, he put a billet into her hand, which, after some reluctant hesitation, she retained; and on arriving at her new habitation, she employed the first moment of undisturbed retirement in examining its contents, which were to this effect.—

“ I have sacrificed my ardent wish of
beholding

beholding you, oh most beloved and revered, to the decorum your situation demands. But how can I forbear reminding you of that vow which my heart has registered, and which gives a new life to my existence ! When the long, long interval is past, ere I can claim the performance of this dear and sacred promise, with what transport shall I not fly to your retreat : and you, Rosaura, will you not meet my faithful love with smiles of welcome—will you not tell me that the engagement, compassion, and duty wrung from those unwilling lips, is become your choice ! and that in conferring a happiness—which once I thought it impossible to attain—you can in some degree partake it with your devoted Orvino ? ’

Rosaura read these lines with an emotion of pleasure she could not control ; but the propriety of her mind condemned it, and she resolved to prohibit any further intercourse between Orvino and herself,

herself, for some months to come: and to this effect she immediately wrote to her friend Anselmo.

The next day brought to the Convent grate, her cousin Viralva, who could not but approve the step she had taken, but who was not to be deterred by entreaties or prohibitions from openly expressing his joy at her future union with Count Orvino, in whose praise he was now become enthusiastic.

“ You alone can reward him, Rosaura,” added he, “ for his warm and brotherly friendship to your fortunate Julio. I have now a company in a distinguished regiment here, with undoubted assurances of speedy promotion: so that I shall ere long make serious advances to my little Virginia—and there likewise Orvino promises me all the interest in his power, in return for certain good offices I have engaged to do him. Adieu, my lovely cousin, such an aspect as that will not amend me, though it may compel me to

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quit the field. I am now hurrying to a house in which I am informed I shall have a chance of beholding your little friend. Adieu, adieu !”

In little more than a week from this time, Signor Andrea di Ruvello, who had returned to Naples, entreated the favour of an audience at the grate, and Rosaura hurried down to the parlour with a beating heart: for though she had been so recently assured of his favourable opinion, yet she feared that he might have been influenced to alter it, not only by Countess Almerini and Signora Alviano, but by an Abbot of the Ruvello family; with whom her deceased husband had been at variance for some time, and who had thought proper to reprobate his marriage.

Signor Andrea accosted her, however, with demonstrations of mingled kindness and respect; expressed his sincere regret at the difficulties and distresses she had encountered, and mentioned his abhorrence of the conduct of his family to a
lady

lady whose alliance had done them honour.

Rosaura acknowledged, with modest ardour, her gratitude for a consideration that dignified her in her own eyes, and which would, she said, reconcile the world to believe her unfortunate, but not debased.

“Those who affect or wish to think otherwise,” replied he warmly, “are debased without having experienced misfortune! Signora Alviano shall bitterly repent her selfish and narrow-hearted policy, in endeavouring to cast upon you a stigma, that she might not feel herself compelled to share with you and my unfortunate cousin, that portion of his spoils she thought proper to appropriate to herself! I will contest that estate with her to my last carlin. Already is the process commenced, and this she knows; but she will not so readily guess when and how it will terminate.”

Rosaura replied not to this sentence,

but mentioned to him in terms of esteem and friendship, the amiable Virginia.

“ Yes, I understand that she is so !” replied he : and my young cousin Virginia shall not, therefore, be injured by my litigation.”

Signor Andrea remained nearly two hours with Rosaura, and departed from her with the favourable opinion he had originally received, much heightened by this interview : so that he proclaimed her merit and deplored her undeserved sufferings in every society he frequented, extremely to the mortification of those who were most interested to believe her unworthy, by having repeated and positively asserted it to the world.

The Countess Almerini now actually besieged the Convent gate ; and Rosaura, wearied by her perpetual solicitation, and ever reluctant to inflict pain, at length admitted her. After a deportment and language the most abject, and adulation the most gross, the Countess implored her
to

to use her influence with the merchant Anselmo, to advance her twenty thousand crowns, without which she must be completely ruined.

Rosaura excused herself, however, from undertaking the commission, by representing how little entitled she was to make such a request, who actually existed upon the bounty of this generous man : yet this circumstance did not appear, to the lady, any bar to her petition ; but on discovering that she could not succeed in inducing Rosaura to make it, she left the Convent in a rage, which imperious necessity only could have compelled her to attempt disguising.

About twice in each week Viralva regularly presented a letter from his friend Orvino ; and as they were unsealed for the purpose, and Viralva threatened to leave them in the care of a Nun, if his fair cousin refused to take charge of them, he was more successful than Orvino himself had ventured to hope : and at length,

when this expedient failed, Rosaura received others enclosed in the most affectionate billets from Virginia Alviano, who informed her that her mother was entirely occupied with her law-suit, and appeared much inclined to allow her the happiness of visiting her beloved cousin, which she hoped soon to improve into an absolute consent.

Virginia mentioned likewise, that Signora Merchini had returned to Naples with her infatuated husband, who was reported to be extremely ill; and the report was confirmed by the close confinement of his wife, who never quitted him.

Very shortly after the receipt of this intelligence, Rosaura was pleasingly surprised by a visit from her gentle correspondent, who embraced her with much affection, and congratulated her upon her approaching marriage with Count Orvino.

“Some time back,” continued Virginia,
“I should have been foolishly pained by
knowing

knowing this : but now I am more reasonable."

Rosaura, smilingly, enquired how she had attained this boasted reasonableness, and soon discovered that Viralva had all the merit of inspiring it ; for Virginia found occasion to protest more than once, that he was the only Cavalier in the whole world, who could be as amiable and as agreeable as Count Orvino.

" I assure you," added she, " that my cousin Signor Andrea di Ruvello likes him very much ; and says that with his merit, and the noble and ancient house he represents, he may aspire, without vanity, to any woman in Naples. I wish my mother would give up that ugly estate to Signor Andrea, or to you, my dear Rosaura, and then perhaps he would be reconciled and come to our house—for I should like him to repeat this in her hearing !"

" Thou art the child of nature still," thought Rosaura ; " and Julio no doubt,

reads all that passes in that guileless heart: but he is a man of honour, and will not betray the artlessness he must admire!"

When six months had elapsed after the unfortunate Ruvello, Rosaura could no longer absolutely refuse the visits of Count Orvino, more especially as Signor Andrea di Ruvello himself introduced him to her, and not unfrequently accompanied him to the grate: but, as in this lamentable world there is scarcely any satisfaction to be obtained without its attendant reverse, she was now assailed by the importunate attentions of the Marquis Asavoli; nor could she free herself from his persecutions, until her friend Signor Anselmo, who soon heard of her embarrassment, and participated in her apprehensions, lest the indignation of Orvino should hurry him into an imprudence, advised her to institute a suit against the Procuratore Buonatesta, in the hope that to shield himself, he would betray the machinations of the Marquis: and as Signor Anselmo himself

secretly

secretly conducted the business, and was not sparing of money to advance it, the plan succeeded. The Procuratore was fined and disgraced for having libelled the administration, and procured money under the false and infamous pretence of bribing any of its members; and when he found himself abandoned by Asayoli, who dared not espouse his house, he sent several of his letters to Rosaura, which so completely developed his intentions respecting her, that when the Marquis understood how well she was empowered to judge him, she saw him no more.

No sooner, however, had she thus checked the importunities of one pretender, than she was compelled to blight the hopes of a second: for Ernesto di Brandosi not being able to obtain a private interview with her, wrote to entreat that she would end the cruel suspense in which he found himself, by general reports of her engagement with Count Orvino, which

3. Signora

Signora Alviano and several others positively contradicted.

“Should it be, indeed, true,” concluded Ernesto, “that your heart has already made its election, I will withdraw my humble suit, and henceforth avoid you: but if you can tell me that you are still free to select amidst those who adore you, him who will be the most enviable of men, admit me to the lists, and veil my want of merit with the extent of an affection that would sacrifice itself to your happiness !”

In her reply, Rosaura thought herself bound to be entirely explicit, and Ernesto instantly embarked for Venice, where he proposed to remain for two or three years.

The period at length arrived, in which Rosaura was to quit the Convent, to fulfil her engagement with Orvino; and the merchant Anselmo then forced upon her acceptance a hundred thousand crowns, which he told her were not so much a parental present to Signora Ruvello, as

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an offering to the bride of Count Orvino, to whom that sum had been appropriated, almost from the time when this generous young man had risked his own life in the streets of Naples, in defending that of a humble and unknown individual like himself.

This intimation was the first Rosaura had ever received of the commencement of a friendship between a gay young Nobleman and an old Plebeian, who, however worthy and estimable he might be, would have been considered and treated with infinite scorn, by almost every other man in the kingdom of the same age and rank with Orvino.

Signor Andrea di Ruvello, who still prosecuted his law-suit with great diligence, likewise presented Rosaura a set of jewels as a small mark of his consideration : and Signora Alviano, who was equally harrassed and dispirited by the ingenuity of his lawyers, at length supplicated the mediation of the once despised Rosaura,
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to accommodate the affair with her vindictive cousin, who, far from proving himself implacable, avowed that he would withdraw his pretensions, provided the contested property were instantly settled upon Virginia, and her hand presented to the Marquis of Viralva, in whose favour Signor Andrea had become warmly interested.

The mother of the amiable Virginia, after rejecting this proposition very peremptorily, at length thought proper to acquiesce in it ; and the marriage was solemnized at the same time with that of Rosaura, who, as Countess Orvino, was once more eagerly, and almost madly idolized by the titled populace of Naples : but her soul rejected with disgust, attachments so local and mercenary ; and Orvino, who could only taste of happiness himself by rendering her happy, soon retired with her to an estate he possessed in Sicily, where, in the society of some of his family, who resembled him in disposition, in integrity,

integrity, and in understanding, Rosaura found a perfect contentment.

Whilst she was yet at Naples, she received a very cordial letter of congratulation from her uncle, Signor Astolfo di Boschero and his wife, which Rosaura so far conquered her resentment and contempt as to reply to with civility: but their very evident aim of being invited to witness her elevation, and share in her affluence, was completely disappointed; and for the remainder of their sordid existence, they reviled and blamed each other for the fault which they had very equally and exactly shared between them.

Not thus did she reply to the congratulations of her early friend the Abbess, who received in behalf of the sisterhood, considerable testimony of the beneficence of Orvino, and the whole village forgot their late calamity in the bounty of Rosaura, which was likewise extended to her faithful Maria and Giovanni, who intermarried with the full assurance that their
offspring

offspring would be supported and reared under the protection and in the household of Count and Countess Orvino.

Rosaura had not been many weeks in Sicily; when Virginia, who resided with her husband at Naples, wrote to her that Signor Merchini had tormented and harassed himself into his grave, and, very much against his will, left his amiable widow the power of chusing a more agreeable and less jealous husband.

Rosaura was delighted with this intelligence, and pleased herself with the prospect of enjoying, unrestrained by ill-humour or caprice, that society of a woman who had evinced to herself such generous benevolence and disinterested esteem; and, towards her gloomy tormentor, such patience, forbearance, and fortitude.

In a very short time after, Rosaura heard, through the same channel, of the disgrace of Countess Almerini, who had sought to repair her shattered fortune at
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the gaming table, by means highly dishonourable, and had been compelled by her husband's family and equally by her poverty, to throw herself into a Convent, where she remained for life, not so much regretting her own misconduct, as repining at the reward of those virtues in another, she was unable to imitate.

The good Anselmo lived to behold and to love the children of his young friends Orvino and Rosaura; between whom he bequeathed his possessions, that they might still be divided, when he was no more, with the poor orphan, the desolate widow, and the wandering outcast, upon whom the luxurious and spendthrift Noble will not even deign to cast an eye, or waste a thought.

Men of rank and wealth—beings bearing titles of honour and distinction, take upon yourselves the distinguished honour of becoming the saviour of only *one* poor wretch who may else be driven by want and despair, to robbery or suicide—find
out

out in this vast metropolis, one father of a helpless family overwhelmed by unmerited misfortunes, and relieve him from pangs such as he only can know, whose industry or whose toil has been vainly exerted to preserve a home, and food, and covering for his children ! Then, when ye ride forth to sell your existence, to maintain in idea the honour of a dog, or the beauty of a ——— you may reflect in the supporting arms of your surgeons and your seconds, that you have not lived in vain !

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